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A Personal Spiritual Formation Strategy for Students at the Australian College of Ministries

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LLOYD IRWIN

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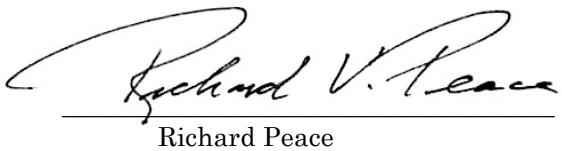

Richard Peace

Kurt Fredrickson

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A PERSONAL SPIRITUAL FORMATION STRATEGY FOR STUDENTS AT THE AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF MINISTRIES

A TRAINING MANUAL
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
THE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

LLOYD IRWIN
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ABSTRACT

A Personal Spiritual Formation Strategy for Students
At The Australian College of Ministries
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Doctor of Ministry
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2015

Seminaries across the globe share a deep concern to address the formational needs of students during training for ministry. However, trainees, faculty and churches alike report that despite the best intentions, spiritual formation remains one of the greatest areas for improvement in seminary experience today. This study identifies the source of this dilemma to be several pressures on and assumptions about seminaries, both internal and external, which conspire to marginalize and trivialize formation. These forces must be overcome to provide adequately for the formational needs of trainees during training.

This study was sparked by 10 years' experience with the search, design and oversight of a more effective formation process for the Australian College of Ministries (hereafter, ACOM) in Australia. The experience highlighted the need for a more considered and robust academic foundation for formation, which this study aims to provide. It argues for a broad view of spiritual formation based on Jesus' holistic approach to equipping his disciples. It sets out to understand the pressures and assumptions which alienate formation in seminaries and seeks ways to overcome them. It tackles the difficult issues of accreditation and assessment which must be overcome for formation to be given the exposure it deserves.

The solution is offered in the form of three accredited core subjects for the curriculum at ACOM but is offered in the hope it may be of use to other seminaries on a similar quest. The strategy provides an intentional process to synthesize the academic study, ministry practice and life experience of trainees in a way which grasps and cooperates with the formational work of God. In so doing, it is hoped that seminaries will be better equipped to meet the formational expectations of churches, faculty and trainees during the critical years of training.

Content Reader: Dr Richard Peace

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INTRODUCTION

At the heart of most Christian seminaries lies a deep interest in being meaningfully involved in both the professional and the personal spiritual formation of students for ministry.[1] However, despite the best intentions, indications are that formation receives neither the airtime nor the attainment it deserves, and its incorporation into many seminary programs looks more like an unwelcome intrusion than a central mission.[2] Not surprisingly, the recent Survey of Global Theological Education commissioned by the World Council of Churches found that both faculty and trainees worldwide rank personal spiritual formation as the second greatest area of need to strengthen in seminary training.[3] This doctoral project seeks to confront this discrepancy by examining the sources of the demand for more robust formation, identifying the challenges for seminaries in meeting this need, and then to offer both a theological pedagogy and a workable solution for positioning personal spiritual formation at the very center of seminary experience.

This study grew from ten years of personal experience as part of the faculty at the Australian College of Ministries (hereafter, ACOM) which included responsibility for the personal spiritual formation of ministry candidates during training. During this period, the

[1] The terms spiritual formation and personal formation will be discussed in depth in Part Two

[2] Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 24.

[3] Esterline, David, Dietrich Werner, Todd Johnson and Peter Crossing, *Global Survey on Theological Education 2011-2013*, presented at the Global Christian Forum at the WCC 10th Assembly, Busan, 30 Oct – 8 Nov 2013, http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/education-and-ecumenical-formation/ete/global-survey-on-theological-education (accessed November 4, 2014). The greatest area of need to strengthen in seminary was found to be cross-cultural communication.

faculty made the decision to centralize the role of spiritual formation in the training process in both practical and conceptual terms. While the intent to provide formational experiences was neither new nor unique amongst theological seminaries, what was new was the commitment to place formation at the center of the training experience, and to support this by embedding it into the curriculum. This demanded a totally new approach which would give formation both the intentionality and credibility needed to find acceptance on an equal footing with other subject areas in the curriculum. It also provided a unique opportunity to explore and experiment with the possibilities in greater depth.

However, the task proved easier said than done, and it turned out there are significant forces in contemporary seminary life which inadvertently conspire to marginalize spiritual formation and spin it back to the periphery of the training experience. These forces range from the pedagogical assumptions on which most seminaries are built through to the demands of delivering a tertiary education program that meets the mandates of various tertiary accrediting bodies. While the will to deliver formation at the heart of the training journey in seminaries is in fact strong, these forces mean that without a radical approach and concerted proactive attention, formation drifts easily and imperceptibly to the fringes of the learning experience.

Success in establishing formation at the center thus required a coherent strategy which provided well for both theological and pedagogical concerns but also tackled the accreditation, governance, staffing, and practical issues raised. This doctoral project builds on this experience to refine and articulate one strategy which puts formation at the heart of the trainee's experience. The solution is given in the form of an integrated, accredited process specifically for ACOM and its training model, but is offered in the

hope that it may contribute to the wider conversation about strengthening formation processes currently underway in seminaries the world over.

The strategy is formulated as three core subjects which were accredited for the undergraduate ministry training curriculum at ACOM. Each subject is centered on a one-year guided group experience designed to support transformational outcomes while at the same time being essentially linked to each other subject in the trainee's semester program. As trainees advance through the three formation subjects, the focus progressively broadens beyond themselves towards others and then to their leadership. In this way the formation process cycles over essential familiar territory but at ever deepening levels.

Part One of the doctoral project (Chapters 1 and 2) describes the challenges for seminaries in providing adequately for personal spiritual formation. It describes the competing forces which often serve to marginalize formation in the curriculum, leaving the personal growth needs of ministry candidates overlooked. It portrays seminaries as caught in the middle, unwillingly and unwittingly stretched between the opposing forces of formational needs on the one hand, and the various pressures of being a tertiary education body on the other, frequently complicated further by being captive to denominational concerns as well. It concludes that to adequately fulfil their mission, seminaries need an intentional strategy for personal formation which is central both to the curriculum and to the trainee's learning experience.

Chapter 1 provides a snapshot of the conflicted state of personal formation in seminaries and surveys its causes. It explores the growing cry for better formation outcomes during training and identifies six specific impetuses compelling seminaries to enrich the trainee's formation journey. It explains why these voices tend to come from

outside seminaries themselves. It then explains the dilemma for seminaries by outlining some of the external pressures that conspire to keep formation supplemental. It proposes ways these valid pressures may be met and overcome to bring formation in from the sidelines so as to provide adequately for the formational needs of ministry candidates during the critical years of training.

Chapter 2 provides a brief theological critique of some key assumptions on which the traditional seminary curriculum is built, and shows how these assumptions also conspire to keep personal formation on the fringes. It describes how these assumptions must be challenged in order to adequately address the unique nature of ministry training. It examines the central place of personal and spiritual health as a basic requirement of adequate preparation for ministry, and concludes that to facilitate this health, personal and spiritual formation needs to find a place on an equal footing in the overall curriculum.

Part Two (Chapters 3 and 4) lays the theological and pedagogical foundation for the proposed personal spiritual formation strategy. Chapter 3 develops a theology of personal formation to show how a healthy personhood plays a central role in effective ministry. It provides a theological rationale for why personal formation is both essential and possible. It argues for a holistic approach to formation which balances the students' spiritual, personal, professional, and interpersonal growth needs. It explores the relationship of seemingly diverse concepts such as character, renewal, spirituality and health, and finds they are closer than they may at first appear. It rethinks the mission of the seminary, using Jesus' purpose and model of equipping as an example and discusses key theological principles to be included in a formation process.

Chapter 4 addresses the common lack of aims, content and structures in approaches to formation at seminary. It discusses how personal growth occurs and builds on the theological foundation above to outline some specific pedagogies and strategies for facilitating personal formation. It groups these pedagogies under the main themes of relational, experiential and extra-rational, and provides key methodologies and examples under each theme. It shows how these strategies will shape the core of a personal formation strategy which will be very different in approach than most pedagogies currently found in a seminary.

Part Three (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) provides the structure for a radical formation strategy which is built on the theology and pedagogy of Part Two. It explains the main themes in the curriculum itself and describes the implementation phase. The strategy is provided as a suite of three accredited subjects, each to run over a nine-month academic year in a decentralized, modular program. Resources for the trainee and facilitator to deliver the course are provided in the Appendices in a form designed to be transferable for use in any seminary, should they be found to be of use to others.

Chapter 5 analyses why efforts to include formation more wholeheartedly in seminaries have often not come to fruition and offers a rationale for the design of a course which is both sustainable and effective. It uses Jesus' model of growing his disciples as a model and shows how an ecosystem of relationships in reflective, life-based contexts can be incorporated within the seminary framework. It shows how students advance through the three subjects so the formation experiences have a compounding effect over their widening field of influence during preparation for Christian leadership. It defines personal spiritual formation broadly by articulating three dimensions of formation which are

addressed equally in the strategy so as to resist a narrow definition of spirituality and to holistically prepare Christian leaders for ministry.

Chapter 6 outlines the structure of the course, giving detailed descriptions of the key roles and contexts. It describes the formation group and role of the formation director in particular as the pivotal contexts in the trainee's experience. It explains the weekly group schedule and the annual curriculum, including how groups are formed and closed. It describes the roles of mentor and coach, and how each makes a unique contribution to the overall aims. It discusses the thorny issue of how personal formation may be accredited and adequately assessed and provides course outcomes.

Chapter 7 provides an evaluation of the strategy, including a description of the implementation phase. It provides feedback from the faculty and trainees who have experienced the strategy, including from graduates about the long-term effectiveness of the strategy for supporting healthy ministries. It outlines the key achievements and challenges of the strategy, and makes recommendations for further improvements based on this experience.

This doctoral project is offered to help redress the discrepancy in many seminary curricula between intention and outcome and to provide a formation strategy to meet a growing cry in ministry training today. It aims to confer greater intentionality on personal spiritual formation in seminaries to become an integral process in training for ministry. It also aims to raise formation onto an equal academic footing with more established subjects in the curriculum so as to move it from the fringes of the seminary into a central role. This is done with the intention that ministers will be better equipped to serve and flourish as spiritual leaders for tomorrow's Church.

PART ONE

THE CHALLENGES FOR THE SEMINARY

CHAPTER 1

THE SEMINARY IN THE MIDDLE

Training for local church ministry in the West used to be a relatively straightforward affair. Historically, church ministers were regarded as educated leaders amongst the working population of the Industrial Age, and some basic characteristics—specifically a good Bible knowledge, a pastoral heart and a passion for the lost—served most ministers well. Clearly, things have changed. The culture, both inside and outside the church, has seen significant shifts, and the needs and pressures facing churchgoers and ministers alike in trying to live for Christ in this context have considerably altered. Ministers today both need and want to be trained in different ways for these different challenges. To heed this call, seminaries need to take stock of the pressures and reassess the assumptions which have fashioned the traditional seminary curriculum.

At the same time, external pressures on seminaries have mounted, subtly drawing resources and attention away from their core mission. In particular, the accreditation atmosphere within which many seminaries function has gradually rarefied, threatening to sequester them from both their surrounding culture and contemporary ministry needs. Increasing academic and accreditation obligations have compelled

seminaries to institutionalize, often buttressed by incumbent mindsets and parent denominational structures. Such external pressures have sometimes pushed seminaries into endeavors that are not aligned with their central mission while efforts at realignment are stymied by decreasing financial resources and increasing workloads which weaken both the will and capacity to act.

The result is not that seminaries have been doing things badly over the years, but rather they have not defined their mission broadly enough. This combination of internal assumptions and external pressures has had the effect of limiting the scope of seminary activity in preparing the minister for our time, especially at deeper personal and spiritual levels. The call today to strengthen personal formation in seminary experience is the result. To meet this need, the assumptions need to be challenged and the external pressures put into perspective to enable the scope of seminary training to be expanded. This chapter will first examine the reasons behind the call for a more robust formation journey during training and then outline the pressures which currently hamper seminaries from delivering it. Chapter 2 which follows will then address the foundational assumptions on which much of seminary training is built and which must be challenged if formational needs are to be adequately met.

The Impetus to Centralize Formation

The impetus to consolidate and strengthen personal spiritual formation in seminary training appears to have at least six sources: methodological, ecclesiological, cultural, professional, pedagogical and theological. The methodological impetus derives from the increasingly flexible ways seminaries worldwide offer their training, ranging

from modular to decentralized to distance education to online. Formation processes in seminaries were traditionally assumed to occur in the crucible of fire that was campus life. This was overseen by members of faculty who often assumed pastoral or mentoring roles over the largely residential student body. While the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of this as a formation strategy is debatable, the loss of campus community has triggered an examination as to how formation needs should be addressed. In ACOM's case, the new flexible model called for the sale of the central campus and the resourcing instead of an internship training model in partnership with local churches, using identified hub churches as local training centers. This necessitated a shift from a residential structure with a weekly timetable to a church-based modular schedule which was student focused rather than teacher driven. The college wanted to enhance personal formation processes in this new model, but had only a rudimentary idea of how this might be achieved, prompting a fresh focus of effort and resources.

The ecclesiological impetus to bolster formation processes during seminary training stems from an increased interest in spirituality and spiritual community in churches. This may be part of a broader interest in spirituality in the cultural shift towards postmodernism, which in the Christian sphere has affected an indifference to the institutional church and an affection instead for the church as a spiritual family embracing spirituality and led by a spiritual leader. Perhaps also there is a reaction to the attractional models of church. An example is Oak Hills Church, California, which was founded on an attractional model but has since refocused on spiritual formation. From this experience, Senior Pastor Kent Carson concludes, "I am fairly certain that the large, entrepreneurial, attractional model church is not the wave of the future because it is not sustainable as a

model of authentic Christian community."[1] Whether or not this turns out to be true, the growing interest in spiritual formation through genuine community in churches is undeniable, and the result is an expectation for the Christian leader to be spiritually aware and mature, proficient in both the theology and practice of spiritual formation and able to lead others into the mysteries of the Spirit.

The cultural impetus to consolidate spiritual formation in seminaries arises from the needs of a church that finds itself gradually dislocated from the center of society and in increased need of counter-cultural leadership. In what was once a Christendom society, western culture centered on the church, which in turn then informally affirmed Christian values and reinforced habits conducive to spiritual growth. Today, western Christians find themselves more frequently at odds with the accepted values of the world in which they live. They find themselves swimming against the tide of secular culture with varying levels of conviction and without the previous cultural and institutional structures to nurture the personal life. The news is not all bad; this reorientation has pushed the understanding of what it means to be a Christian beyond the mere respectability that often passed for discipleship in years gone by. In many ways, the West has become more like New Testament times, where the church was expected to stand out. In Philippians 2:14-16, Paul urges the Philippian church to "Do everything without complaining or arguing so that you may become blameless and pure, children of the God without fault in a crooked generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of

[1] Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken, *The Renovation of the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 175.

life."[2] In today's similarly syncretistic world, a good head knowledge of theology and behavior that conforms to society's norms is not enough. Christians today need to integrate practice with belief and to be shaped by the Spirit in deep ways to respond to new and unusual situations as Jesus might do. For this they look to their pastors for guidance who often feel inadequately prepared for such a task.

Similarly, the professional impetus to consolidate spiritual formation surrounds the expectations for integrity and maturity of the Christian leader. The Bible certainly affirms the central place of mature character and integrity in the life of the Christian leader. Paul regarded it as a key requirement for candidature as a leader that a person be above reproach (1 Timothy 3:2). Leaders are admonished to be examples in both life and work (1 Peter 5:12, 1 Timothy 4:12) and are urged to be blameless (Titus 1:6) and worthy of respect (1 Timothy 3:8) because they are entrusted with God's work. At point here are not only moral issues of significance, but also everyday emotional and interpersonal issues in the way people relate to others. As Paul goes on to explain, a leader must also be not "overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain" (Titus 1:7). In discussing Christian leadership, the New Testament regularly lists good character as a key qualification.

Broader society also intuitively understands the link between leadership and character and a question about a leader's credibility can mean the end of a career. Unhappily, leaders from all walks of life, from sport to politics to business, frequently find themselves the topic of conversation in the media after their weaknesses get the

[2] All Scripture quoted is from the New International Version Bible, unless otherwise noted.

better of them in a lapse of better judgement or a flaw of character, which then draws a reaction of protest from the general community. On the surface, the reaction in the community to the personal flaws of leaders seems hypocritical, given that few personal lives would withstand the same public scrutiny, and where many would even reject the same standards for themselves that they demand from those they follow. However, the credibility of a leader matters to people because they draw the link between the personal and professional spheres of a leader, assuming inadequacy in one means inadequacy in the other. Certainly, a constituency expects its leaders to be capable, but people more deeply want their leaders to be "good"–to be people of character, virtue, steadfastness and incorruptibility, to be role models of the better side of humanity rather than facilitators of the worst.

To follow a leader is a profound act of trust – an act where followers stake their own aspirations, goals and reputations on the leader. So followers choose leaders who they assess to be credible, believable, and worth following, and this choice represents a considerable emotional investment. This is even more so for pastoral interactions, which are also contexts of deep personal sharing and shared life events. Over time, the pastoral relationship earns a special place in many people's heart for the support provided and the confidences shared. This deepens the emotional faith placed in ministers, lifting them again to greater heights from which they can fall. When this trust is disappointed, or worse betrayed, the impact can be disastrous for both the people affected and the systems they lead, leaving remnant scars on people and churches that are very deep indeed. For this reason, John Stott concludes, "fundamental to all Christian ministry and leadership is a humble, personal relationship with Christ, with devotion to him expressed in daily

prayer, and love for him expressed in daily obedience."[3] In this context, significant effort needs to be invested in supporting and sustaining the personal integrity and maturity of the leader.

The pedagogical impetus to bolster formation during seminary training also comes internally from the seminaries themselves arising from questions about the inadequacy of academic teaching processes to provide contexts for adequate formation. Western education commonly uses "an assumed anthropology of persons as thinking beings. The assumption is that if persons think correctly they will act correctly."[4] However, the formation of persons at a deep level is more indirect and requires us "to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us."[5] This process is slow, unpredictable and essentially relational with "attainment" being ultimately a gift of God's grace through his Spirit. As James Wilhoit describes it, "Our goal is a spiritual formation that, by the receiving of God's grace and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, moves a curriculum for Christlikeness from a teaching approach to a living, breathing, gospel-directed life of shared community."[6] Chapter 3 will address an appropriate pedagogy for personal spiritual formation in much greater depth, suffice for now to say that contexts

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[3] Dr. John Stott, "The Nature of Christian Pastoral Ministry: An Exposition of 1 Corinthians 4," John Mark Ministries, http://www.jmm.org.au/articles/8672.htm (accessed July 10, 2010).

[4] Brad D. Strawn and Miyoung Yoon Hammer, "Spiritual Formation through Direction at Fuller Theological Seminary School of Psychology," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 32 No.4 (Winter 2013): 304-312, http://search.proquest.com/socialsciences/docview/ 1497174689/ 3B0D4DF588754E02PQ/21? (accessed July 17, 2014).

[5] Richard J. Foster, *Streams of Living Water* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), 7.

[6] James C. Wilhoit, S*piritual Formation as if the Church Mattered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. 2008), 202.

and measures which can allow for this have often been difficult to accomplish in an academic environment with its rational approach, and many seminaries are wrestling with ways to do better.

The last, and arguably most important, impetus to bolster formation processes during seminary training is the theological impetus that ministry is essentially incarnational. God the Father demonstrated this by sending his own Son as a human being to share his life with others: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14). The way Jesus lived was as instructive as his teaching, as demonstrated by the reaction of the soldiers at Jesus' crucifixion: "And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39). The Sanhedrin, too, acknowledged the impact of Jesus' presence on others when trying to stop the spread of his message: "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

The incarnational ministry of Jesus was built upon a deep interconnectedness between Father and Son, as a brief walk though Jesus' claims in John's gospel shows. He ministered in perfect intimacy with the Father: "I and the Father are one . . . The Father is in me and I in the Father" (John 10:30, 38), in perfect synchronicity with the Father: "The Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does" (John 5:19-20), and in perfect obedience to the Father: "My food . . . is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:34), "I always do what pleases him" (John 8:29), "I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has

taught me" (John 8:28). The ministry of Jesus was actually the ministry of the Father through him.

God's choice of incarnation as the key strategy to redeem the world suggests that people and structures are renewed best through a "meeting of persons" rather than a functional, ceremonial, or institutional approach. A godly presence and a shared journey facilitates personal transformation in ways that a deep theological knowledge, great leadership skills, shrewd management or inspirational preaching on their own can only imagine. This means that ministry flows mostly from the person of the leader, rather than the capacity of the leader. In other words, it matters more who the leader is rather than what the leader does. If this is true, then the personhood of the minister is critical, not just for maintaining credibility, but also as the key raw material which is used by God in the transformational work of ministry itself. Formation, then, becomes critical to effective ministry, leaving much at stake for the personhood of the individual minister.

These six sources both explain and support the growing interest in a more robust personal spiritual formation strategy during training for ministry. Clearly adequate training must consider who the minister is as much as what the minister knows and how well the minister performs various roles and functions. However, in seeking to meet these needs for personal formation, seminaries face various pressures and assumptions, both internal and external, which mean that this is easier said than done. Before offering a solution, these pressures and assumptions need to be clearly articulated.

The Pressures to Marginalize Formation

By their very nature, seminaries are obliged to meet many expectations which, while not central to their role, are nonetheless essential for their functioning. These apply pressures which serve to skew the curriculum away from formational concerns. These pressures have been broadly grouped below as academic pressures, accreditation pressures and denominational pressures. Each of them has applied pressure at both the conceptual and practical levels on the training experience that seminaries provide. Centering formation in the curriculum will require an awareness of and targeted resistance to these pressures rather than the elimination of the pressures altogether. These pressures are outlined below.

Academic Pressures

Academic pressures marginalizing formation fall into three categories. The first is to do with educational standards. More robust standards are being applied across the tertiary sector by government bodies to ensure the quality of education delivery and to clamp down on rogue universities and courses. This entails greater reporting of the academic credentials of both course and teacher, as these are the easiest factors to validate and report. Formation, with its focus on personal growth and maturity does not fit easily into the academic box, and its inexact character means those charged with maintaining and reporting on standards are often both suspicious and confounded by it all at once.

The more demanding standards have also generated a huge increase in administrative workload for both government and institution. The effect has been for seminaries to cooperate more for administrative functions, introducing the need for

moderation of courses and results across consortia. In the Australian context, this has been intensified by a federal government policy, in the interests of efficiency, of working only with conglomerates in the ministry training field and not with individual institutions. The effect of moderation has been to define standards more clearly using factors which are more easily measured, thus generally producing a narrowing of the educational scope towards the academic. The fallout for formational strategies has been a tendency to define them more in academic terms than in terms of formational outcomes.

The second category of academic pressure is the nature of the faculty itself. By definition, a faculty is academic in orientation and is under increasing obligation to demonstrate and maintain academic credentials. This creates an unavoidable culture of academic norms and values. Given the relatively small size of most seminary faculties, the teaching staff is usually required to teach across disciplines, including any part of the accredited curriculum devoted to formation. This often does not provide well either for faculty or for formation itself which requires for a style of engagement with which many academics are uncomfortable. It is not that members of faculty are opposed to healthy formational component during training. In fact, as Robert Banks observes, there is "a growing consensus that (formation) must be an intentional part of seminary training both inside and outside the classroom."[7] However, the challenge remains how to adequately resource formation processes with adequately credentialed staff.

The academic nature of the faculty also influences the place of formation in the curriculum as a whole, given that faculty is usually the key driver in curriculum design. A

[7] Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 25.

common side effect is to push formation into being content driven rather than pursuing the much messier and less tangible processes of personal transformation. Frequently in the Protestant sphere, a dichotomy between theory and practice has developed as a result, and personal formation is sometimes replaced by moral formation or ethics, involving the learning and valuing of certain truths which can be more easily measured. Instead, the curriculum must be structured to be more inclusive of formation and to provide adequate space for the development of personhood at deep levels. To do this, seminaries need to ensure a broader representation in curriculum design, including theologians, educators and "industry" stakeholders.

The third category of academic pressure has to do with the structure of the academic year, which often does not suit formational processes or even assimilating a formation strategy such as the one proposed by this project. Most seminaries have come to be organized around semester-based subjects typically delivered through a combination of lectures and tutorials. By being so interconnected with growth and maturity, personal formation requires a longer timeframe, a smaller group and a more diverse range of experiences than can be typically delivered in a semester subject format. Being at such odds with the timetable, calendar and class arrangements typical of current seminary practices means the inclusion of formation becomes problematic.

Of course, academic pressures also apply a positive force for formation as well as the resistance already identified. The need for academic rigor within any formation strategy is not in question if it is to be an integral part of seminary training. The issue is how to protect formation processes from becoming an academic pursuit. Academic pressures may be harnessed as a positive influence by ensuring that any formation process

is firstly academically informed, is subsequently rigorous and is then adequately monitored and assessed.

Exponents of formation at seminaries will therefore probably find themselves permanently and uncomfortably straddling a difficult divide. It is challenging for seminaries to find staff that can meet government requirements for academic accreditation on the one hand while having the capacity to facilitate effective formation processes on the other. For most seminaries, this will require the inclusion of adjunct faculty with specialist training. At the end of the day, the academic issue is a tension that needs to be recognized and balanced rather than eradicated.

Accreditation Pressures

Similarly, the process of accreditation applies pressure on seminaries as they seek to implement formation processes in the curriculum. First, it can be difficult to accredit an effective formation process because it does not always fit neatly into standard subject descriptors or templates. This can make it difficult to document both the processes and content of formation in ways that satisfy the requirements for subject accreditation. Often measures used for accreditation are difficult to answer in regard to formation, and the answers that are available often appear too ethereal. The deepest value of formation, namely the personal health and growth of the student, does not easily find a voice during accreditation because accreditation processes generally ask questions limited to the knowledge, skills and values imparted. This can lead some to conclude that the content of personal formation appears weak or that formation is not even a “real” subject.

Second, it can be difficult to accredit faculty members with the gifts and experience suitable for formation. The ministry-related skills required to facilitate formation and the academic orientation necessary for faculty accreditation are rarely found in the same person. In addition, as shall be shown, a good formation process is multi-faceted, requiring a constellation of inputs and one person cannot fulfil all these facets. This suggests the use of a team of adjunct faculty to best meet such diverse needs, providing seminaries with something of an accreditation nightmare.

Third, formation is notoriously difficult to assess as is required for accreditation purposes. Many important sociological, educational and theological questions are raised when considering how to evaluate personal formation. Is it possible to assess a person's formation? And if so, should the course assess certain standards of maturity regarded as critical for effective ministry or a person's growth towards maturity as compared to the starting point? Can each person be assessed against the same benchmarks, or is formation a unique journey and state for each person? Do lapses in the journey towards deeper personal formation indicate failure, or are these the very contexts and raw material for formation as ordained by a redemptive God for a sinful people? Is it ever wise to provide a poor assessment of formation for an individual, and given the intense personal connection that develops during the relational processes of formation, is this even possible? None of these questions is easy, and they all speak of the difficulty of quantifying and objectively assessing a process which is not about learning a body of knowledge or mastering a given skill. Assessment may appear to raise more hurdles than it clears, and yet this demand of accreditation must be met if formation is to be central to the curriculum.

Denominational Pressures

Lastly, seminaries usually face pressures from their umbrella organization or denomination to deliver a certain kind of leader for its churches. These umbrella organizations often support the institution financially, and count on a supply of suitably qualified and capable church leaders in return. This often confers on formation processes an emphasis on pastoral and leadership capability at the expense of spirituality and personal maturity, and uses the growth of churches, rather than the health and Christlikeness of churches, as a measure of leadership success. It frequently prefers people of action rather than of reflection. This creates an institutional culture which is sometimes at odds with the desire of ministry trainees and with the seminaries themselves. It causes a competition for the ministry candidate's time during training, often towards the vocational rather than the spiritual. The urgency of the need often overwhelms the strategic priority that Christian leaders have healthy personhoods, be well grounded in God and familiar with the habits that will make their ministry sustainable.

Both denominations and seminaries also have the disadvantage of incumbency. They can both be institutional in nature, slow on their feet and wedded to current practices. Resource poor, they are often logistically unable to manage change or muster the energy for creative approaches to programming. At the same time their histories often apply an inherent inertia against change, making new approaches to ministry training difficult to implement. They often limit formation practices to those drawn from their own, often narrow, histories, therefore missing the "riches of a variety of vital theological and spiritual traditions" that can be more readily found in seminaries that belong to an

ecumenical consortia.[8] Unless both seminaries and denominations can find the courage to revolutionize their own structures from within to provide better for formation, it may turn out, as Banks concludes, that "change to ministry training processes and the place of formation will come instead through new ventures in theological education on the margins of the church and the academy."[9]

However, as denominations increasingly need to deal with the evidence and fallout of flawed personhood and inadequate spirituality in their ministers, formation during training is receiving a growing acceptance. Many denominations are even now focused on becoming healthy systems in their own right, and are including various strategies for personal formation as part of their requirements for professional accreditation of ministers. In this regard, denominations and associations may, in fact, add new weight to the importance of formation during training in the future.

The Place of Personal Formation in the Seminary Curriculum

This chapter began with the cry for increased formation during training and included anecdotal evidence of the causes and impact of pastoral collapse. The statistics bear witness to these concerns. In the Australian context, of a national population of only 22 million and of which just ten percent regularly attend church, there an estimated 10,000 trained pastors of working age who are no longer in ministry.[10] Clear statistics on

[8] Robin Maas and Gabriel O'Donnell, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church*. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 19.

[9] Ibid., 258.

[10] John Mark Ministries Australia, *Who Cares?* http://www.jmm.org.au/articles/8672.htm (accessed July 10, 2010).

why these pastors have left have not been gathered, but the evidence of John Mark Ministries, whose mission it is to minister to these pastors, maintains without question that the overriding problems are with personal issues in the life of the pastor. The personal growth needs of ministry candidates cannot continue to be overlooked if this tide of pastoral collapse is to be stemmed and vital, long-term ministries sustained instead.

However, the assumptions and pressures outlined above are indeed substantial and have therefore applied substantial pressure over many years to shape the curriculum as it is. This has included the marginalizing of formational issues and sometimes their avoidance altogether. While this marginalization is understandable it is nonetheless an inadequate response for today. The needs for personal formation during training outweigh the problems against it, and solutions must be found for ministers to be prepared for the long term.

In fact, as the raw material of the pastoral leadership, the person of the pastor deserves a central place in the curriculum itself. In fact, as will be argued in Part Two, the training approach of Jesus with his disciples shows that the role of the seminary is in fact no different from the role of the church; that is, to create disciples, albeit to do so more intensively. As such, this strategy for personal formation in seminaries is not new, but rather an attempt to recapture of the essential training approach of Jesus with his disciples. It argues that instead of seeing trainee ministers as professionals gaining a tertiary education, it is more useful to view them primarily as disciples on the road of preparation for spiritual leadership, and this discipleship journey must be attended to more thoroughly if they are to be effective spiritual leaders for the church.

Clearly, the personal needs of pastors cannot be left to chance and such a central need during the critical years of training can no longer afford to be sidelined. Banks agrees that this is the first step in revolutionizing the seminary curriculum for today's world: "First, the curriculum should be structured so that the moral dimension to ministry is fully addressed."[11] Such a formational strategy needs to be intentional, central and integral to the curriculum if it is to have the desired effect. This will require from seminaries both some upgrading of how formation is generally taught and some flexibility from other disciplines to live with the uniqueness of formational strategies.

Rather than dismantle existing structures within seminaries with all the capability of people and structures involved, this study seeks to place the formational journey at the center of seminary experience as the defining and informing process to give perspective to the academic journey and to integrate it with ministry practice. It seeks to use the pressures that threaten to sideline formation as tools to enhance it instead and ensure it is fully accredited and accepted on an equal academic footing. In short, it seeks to bring the essential work of seminaries back into the center of training rather than be left on the fringes as is often the case.

[11] Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 27.

CHAPTER 2

RETHINKING SOME KEY ASSUMPTIONS

The limited role of formation during traditional ministry training has its source in a number of pedagogical assumptions upon which seminary life was built. These include assumptions about the personhood of ministry candidates, the role of seminaries and the nature of education. These foundational assumptions now deserve to be challenged one by one in light of contemporary culture.

Assumptions about the Personal Condition of the Candidate

The first assumption on which seminary life was built was that people presenting themselves for ministry training are already well advanced in spiritual maturity. The normal processes of church life supported by the surrounding culture were thought to lead people to maturity, where eventually the "cream would rise to the top" and apply to the seminary to train for ministry. The problem with this assumption is that it underestimates the formational power of contemporary secular culture and overestimates the depth of transformational community in the church to support formation. However, while over-optimistic today, this assumption was not once as far-fetched as it may at first seem.

During much of the twentieth century, western culture was the culture of Christendom, [1] which revolved around the church and therefore acted so as to informally reinforce Christian values in ways which were both pervasive and persuasive. In this society, the church played a central role as one of the "cultural elites of the West" with its leaders acting as "unofficial Court chaplains to the culture."[2] The result was that biblical values were valued as indicators of maturity, and behaviors which led to maturity were rewarded and reinforced. While by no means universally adopted, the maxims of society offered guidance for personal growth for those who wanted it by affirming those growth-oriented Christian practices such as self-sacrifice, self-discipline, commitment and delayed gratification. Thus people could be "coached" to maturity on the tides of culture itself which assumed a corrective and guiding role. With the church at the center of the action, it seemed reasonable to expect that people presenting themselves for ministry had first made considerable progress on the road to personal maturity.

However, today's more secular culture has moved away from a church-centered locus and tends to apply a formational pull away from biblical principles. Instead of reinforcing maturity, it has become instead a culture of "artificially extended adolescence."[3] Ironically, this has had the positive effect of sharpening the focus of the unique place of the church and its mission. "We are coming to see that there is a sharp distinction between the gospel and Culture, and this is surely one necessary condition of

[1] Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 51.

[2] William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Renewal* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 153.

[3] Benedict J. Groeschel, *Spiritual Passages* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 47.

the modern church recovering its identity."[4] Peter describes this identity. "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). This unique character of the church is now more distinct than in previous generations, and changes the assumptions on which both church and seminary function.

Candidates for ministry, regardless of their personal commitment, are not immune to the influences of culture, and yet generally arrive largely unaware of its impact on their foundational values, habits and outlook. As products of their time, they present for training in various states of maturity. Though they may arrive with a heart for God, they may nonetheless arrive with inner lives in diverse states of spiritual, emotional and relational disorder. If seminaries are to produce healthy leaders to lead healthy churches, they must provide contexts to address these diverse states as part of the process of adequate preparation to minister.

This assumption that candidates present themselves already reasonably advanced in spiritual maturity also overestimates the human inclination to maturity. The Bible describes maturity as hard work and counsels a healthy skepticism about the level of maturity achieved: "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12), Paul says, and invokes the imagery of an elite athlete by urging "strict training" to "run the race in such a way as to get the prize" (1 Corinthians 9:24-25). Paul advises Timothy to "watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Timothy 4:16) indicating the

[4] Abraham, Ibid., 154.

capriciousness of human growth. Likewise, Peter appeals to believers to "make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10) and urges "every effort" (2 Peter 1:5) towards godly qualities such as self-control and perseverance. Hebrews urges us to leave behind the "milk" of spiritual infancy and aspire to the solid food of "the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil" (Hebrews 5:14). This is not the sentiment of "automatic" maturity and indicates that without proactive effort, human behavior is more inclined to immaturity than to growth. Thus ministry leaders need intentionality in the practices and habits of spiritual maturity during training, including engaging in communities of support and accountability and establishing the habits which will sustain increasing maturity beyond graduation.

Alongside this reorientation toward the unique, essential mission of the church comes a rediscovery of a rich heritage in spiritual formation that can be employed to guide seminaries towards more holistic equipping processes, particularly in the overlooked areas of spiritual practices, authentic community and presence with God. To this may also be added the growing body of knowledge about personal and corporate health from other disciplines like psychology and sociology. Given the changes in society and the needs of the church, fluency in spiritual formation will be a key leadership quality for the church and the church leader of the future. If seminaries are to meet the need for such spiritual leaders, they must raise their stake in formational areas and draw from all these sources to equip the whole person.

Assumptions about the Role of the Seminary

The second assumption traditionally limiting the role of formation during ministry training was that training for ministry is primarily about acquiring biblical knowledge. The fundamentals of seminary training were regarded in essentially propositional terms, aimed at laying a solid foundation of conceptual Bible and theological truth in order to preach the Word, protect against heresy and offer helpful biblical principles in times of need. To this primary objective was later added, in a distant second place, the development of some pastoral skills, such as preaching and pastoral counselling.

Formational needs in traditional programs were often just given a token nod in the form of a regular chapel service, or just left to the close-quarters of communal seminary life to "knock off the rough edges." Sometimes, formation strategies were just the pragmatic realities of seminary life, with the formational value being no more than lip service.[5] This was evident in the training model used by ACOM in decades past. There, the perfunctory effort at formation was through non-accredited adjunct units, taught by a non-academic guest lecturer, usually a retired local pastor. The basic concern was not to tackle the growth and health of the whole person, but to convey some basic pastoral skills and, as one adjunct lecturer from the time described it, "to help the minister learn how to get along with people."[6]

[5] An internal survey in 1991 of 120 graduates asked about the ten years from 1980-1990. This showed that Chapel was regarded primarily as an opportunity to practice preaching and worship leading, and that the experience of campus community was often traumatic rather than maturing. Such processes lacked the intentionality and guidance necessary to become healthy formation experiences.

[6] Anonymous adjunct lecturer, interview by author, Sydney, Australia. 2006.

Where this assumption is adopted by a seminary, the marginalization of formation is inevitable. Alister McGrath observes, "The idea of theology as a purely academic subject forces personal spiritual formation ... out on a limb."[7] However, this assumption ignores the essentially holistic character of human nature and of Christian faith and ministry. A cognitive understanding of theological concepts is not sufficient to comprehend the full purpose of God's plan for the world, nor to bring about the way of life and maturity that the Bible asks of believers. In fact considering theology as an academically neutral discipline has been disastrous for the right understanding of theology and spirituality,[8] yet this notion has filtered through all levels of the church.[9]

Certainly, Jesus was unimpressed by the Pharisees, despite their deep familiarity with the concepts and tenets of the Law, because there was not a corresponding inner-life match (Matthew 23:27-28). For Jesus, it is the true, deep nature of the person that needs equipping and sanctifying, not just the mind, as it is from that nature that a person's life flows: "Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit" (Matthew 7:18). Outward behaviors are merely an expression of what is inside, for "out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45).

To design seminary courses to simply hone biblical knowledge while leaving the remainder of the person to chance is to run the risk of developing leaders who cannot lead

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[7] Alister McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 28.

[8] Ibid., 27.

[9] For instance, Wilhoit and Ryken note how lay people generally follow an academic model in teaching Bible in the church, following the example of their pastor. Jim Wilhoit and Leyland Ryken, *Effective Bible Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 38.

spiritually, and instead need to be helped themselves. Indeed, at least one courageous protestant seminary professor has admitted that even after years of theological study and teaching, he made the disturbing discovery that he did not know God.[10] Though intellectually adept or managerially competent, pastors who focus on biblical knowledge at the expense of biblical wisdom as a way of life sometimes find themselves outshone by their churches in spiritual formation and in knowing God. They become like the priests in King Hezekiah's reign who were embarrassingly surpassed by their Levite brothers in consecrating themselves for God's work (2 Chronicles 29:34).

This is not to deny that certain intellectual truths must be understood or to suggest that academic rigor is not a worthy pursuit. The New Testament contains enough references to truth and doctrine to make any postmodernist squirm (eg Titus 2:1), and believers are warned by such characters as Hymenaeus and Philetus that teaching that wanders from the truth is like gangrene in the church (2 Timothy 2:17). Rather, it is to say that Christian theology cannot remain faithful to its subject matter if it regards itself as purely propositional or cognitive in nature.[11] Tilden Edwards writes, "The cognitive mind has its rightful spiritual place as communicator, connector, integrator and critic. But it cannot finally grasp the mystery of God and our deepest identity. These finally must be lived and obscurely noticed from the inside."[12] Academic rigor is essential, but growth in

[10] W. Paul Jones, "My Days with the Trappist Monks," *International Christian Digest* 1, no. 7 (1987): 24, quoted in Maas and O'Donnell, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church*, 11.

[11] McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction.* 29.

[12] Tilden Edwards, *Living in the Presence: Disciplines for the Spiritual Heart* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1987), 136.

wisdom must accompany growth in knowledge, so that what ministry leaders are learning they are also "becoming."

The propositional approach also ignores the largely relational and spiritual natures of ministry itself. Effectiveness in ministry, like faith itself, does not spring first and foremost from knowledge, but from the inner person of the minister. The work of Parker J. Palmer affirms the essential impact of the person of the teacher in effectively influencing and leading others to grow by saying "technique is what (teachers) use until the real teacher arrives."[13] Palmer describes how the ability to influence others comes from being present in authentic relationship which, he says, springs from a deep self-knowledge and self-awareness: "What we teach will never take unless it is connected to the inward living core of our students' lives, with our students' inward teachers. We can speak to the teacher within our students only when we are on speaking terms with the teacher within ourselves."[14] In contrast, a focus on propositional content leaves this essential dimension of deep learning unused.

In fact, relationship in shared spiritual journeys is also the biblical mechanism by which leaders and their people can grow into maturity, as "Speaking the truth in love we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). Not surprisingly, the Bible is replete with references to "one another" (for example, Galatians 5:13-15; Ephesians 4:29-32; Colossians 3:13-16) in describing the true nature of Christian theology. Even the genre of the Bible itself, as God's unfolding story of his relationship

[13] Parker J Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.1998), 5.

[14] Ibid., 31.

with his creation rather than as a theological text book is indication enough that the cognitive is insufficient to grasp the nature of faith or fulfil the duties of ministry. In this context, the Bible is not reduced to a book of truth but should be regarded as a full, living, active member of the community.[15] This is further reinforced by the biblical principle of reproduction, where people learn to become like their leaders through modelling, example and imitation (2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Corinthians 11:1). This was the key ministry training strategy of Jesus, as mentoring expert Gunther Krallman notes, "The unequalled genius of . . . (Jesus') approach was that by training good followers, he actually raised outstanding leaders."[16]

It comes as no surprise, then, that matters of the heart feature prominently in New Testament lists of qualifications for church leadership (for example, 1 Timothy 3:2-12, Titus 1:6-8). Christian life and ministry flow from the core of the person and the Bible affirms that leaders need to have a healthy core. Critically, the development of this core is simply not a cerebral task. Palmer concludes that "teaching and learning require a higher degree of awareness than we ordinarily possess"[17] and this capacity must be deliberately developed in personal reflection during training.

Looked at this way, the task of the seminary is no different from the task of the local church, though perhaps only more intensive. The key to becoming an effective long-term missional leader is spiritual growth – that is, maturing in Christ or developing the

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[15] Doug Pagitt, *Reimagining Spiritual Formation: A Week in the Life of an Experimental Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 32.

[16] Gunter Krallmann, *Mentoring for Mission* (Hong Kong: Jensco, 1992), 128.

[17] Palmer, Ibid., 73.

character of Christ. Thus the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) are key qualities for aspiring Christian leaders. The primary context for this growth is the equipping church (Ephesians 4:1-16), and to the extent that ministry candidates arrives unformed for training, seminaries need to assume this role. As McGrath says, "The Christian encounter with God is transformative,"[18] and seminaries must ensure they facilitate such an encounter with God rather than just with propositional theological truth.

Assumptions about the Nature of Education

Related to this, the third assumption limiting the place of formation in ministry is the rationalist conception common in the Western world that the task of education is the transfer of information. From the time of the Enlightenment, the capacity for objective thought enjoyed a privileged position. Educational processes were developed around "an assumed anthropology of persons as thinking beings. The assumption is that if persons think correctly they will act correctly."[19] Several centuries of "progress" that followed were deemed to have proven the power of rationalism. The "lower" subjective aspects of life, like relationships, feelings, ethics and desires, were considered an impediment to the neutrality of objective thought, and therefore to be repressed or disregarded. A shaky dualism developed, separating mind and heart, as education focused on the "higher" faculty of thinking and the accumulation of knowledge. Subjective impulses, it was argued, would then toe the line behind the compelling and self-evident logic of

[18] McGrath, Ibid., 29.

[19] Strawn and Hammer, "Spiritual Formation through Direction at Fuller Theological Seminary School of Psychology," 306.

rationalism, and remain at the command of an informed and well-trained mind. Either way, they were deemed to have certainly no place in higher education. In such an environment, "the self is not a resource to be tapped, but a danger to be repressed."[20]

Seminaries responded by organizing their educational processes to be informational rather than transformational, placing cognitive subject areas like systematic theology, anthropology and biblical languages at the center of their curricula. A seminarian himself, Maas observes from his own experience; "the demands of academic respectability ensure that second order theology[21] will receive pride of place in the curriculum,"[22] a point of challenge for the current project.

Thus seminaries were convinced to organize theological education as primarily a matter of the mind,[23] which can be more efficiently organized and more readily assessed. As products of western educational institutionalism, and cheered on by a cerebral Protestantism, the seminary has pursued an intellectual approach to faith and ministry, and accordingly has stocked its faculties and curricula with a generally inadequate emphasis on personal and cultural issues. For as long as faith was defined in western Enlightenment terms involving objective reasoning, and as long as western society revolved almost monolithically around Judeo-Christian principles, this inadequacy remained largely undetected.

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[20] Palmer, *The Courage to Teach,* 18.

[21] In other words, conceptual or scientific theology.

[22] Maas and O'Donnell, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church*, 18.

[23] Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education,* 24.

However, the cracks in the rationalist dream have become more evident in recent times, making it seem increasingly utopian given the lack of traction it has provided for solving the great problems of human existence. Palmer gets straight to the point: "The real agenda of objectivism is not to tell the truth but to shore up our self-aggrandizing myth that knowledge is power and with it we can run the world."[24] In a telling insight for seminaries, Palmer observes about ministry in particular: "We are obsessed with manipulating externals because we believe that they will give us some power over reality and win us some freedom from its constraints. That is why we ... train clergy to be CEOs but not spiritual guides."[25] Now, as part of the welcome postmodernist reaction to rationalism, the need for spirituality and formation has become apparent everywhere, while at the same time, "left wing academics and credibility hungry Christian scholars are both being left behind by an era of superstition, irrationality and spiritual hunger."[26] Across the spectrum from business[27] to education,[28] greater attention is being given to the person behind the role and to gaining better integration between knowing and living.

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[24] Palmer, Op. cit., 56.

[25] Ibid., 19.

[26] Craig Detwiler and Barry Taylor, *A Matrix of Meanings* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 22.

[27] For example Kouzes and Posner write: "Leadership is personal. … If people don't believe in you, they won't believe in what you say. And if it's about you, it's about your beliefs, your values, your principles." James M Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Credibility* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 34. The popularity of the notion of Emotional Intelligence is another example. Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam, 1995).

[28] The work of Palmer is the benchmark here.

This was startlingly demonstrated in the ACOM survey of graduates previously mentioned.[29] This survey provided a shock result by returning a small inverse correlation between grades at seminary and long-term effectiveness in ministry. This meant that good seminary grades were no indication—or even worse, possibly a mildly negative indication—of healthy and effective long-term ministry. This brought into question the entire collection of content and experiences which constituted seminary training at the time, including both curriculum and staffing. The cognitive approach with some casual spirituality thrown in was clearly not preparing people to become spiritual leaders for Christ's church. Pagitt agrees that this experience is common: "Proper knowledge acquired through education has failed to produce the kind of radical commitment to life in harmony with God in the way of Jesus that we are called to. When the realities of life crush into our knowledge of God, faith is often the prime casualty."[30]

Despite the continuing attractiveness of the cerebral to the tertiary sector at large, educational theory abandoned the information transfer paradigm some time ago in favor of educational goals that see transformation as their purpose. As early as the 1940s, more holistic educational thinking was emerging, such as; "learning takes place through experiences"[31] and that the real purpose of education is "not to have the teacher perform certain activities, but to bring about a significant change in learners' patterns of behavior.

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[29] Keith Farmer, Churches of Christ in NSW Theological College internal survey (Unpublished), 1991.

[30] Pagitt, *Reimagining Spiritual Formation,* 23.

[31] Ralph W. Tyler, *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 63.

School objectives should be a statement of changes to take place in students."[32] In the same way, seminaries also need to grasp the educational nettle and similarly revolve their learning experiences around a change in their ministry trainees' behavior, using integrative processes to prevent dualistic mindsets developing. This will require a shift from content to process and from knowledge to outcomes, and with a strong formational thread running throughout.

Again, Jesus provides an example. It was this same dualistic separation of mind and heart that Jesus criticized in the Jews, but which could equally be levelled at any approach to faith which is essentially cognitive: "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39-40). Seminaries dare not re-create this same dichotomy during training. To Jesus, knowledge alone is insufficient, as any mastery of knowledge is pointless without an attendant quality of life. In fact, far from advocating for his followers the attainment of complex knowledge, Jesus said the entire Law could be summed up in simple wise and selfless behaviors: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12). In contrast to the Rabbinic teachers, he did not want his disciples to master the Law, but to have the Law master them.

Establishing Formation in the Curriculum

These insufficient assumptions have together prompted many seminaries to make decisions which have marginalized personal formation in their training processes.

[32] Ibid., 44.

The result is that ministers are graduating feeling unprepared at deep personal levels, and churches are disappointed by the maturity and personal leadership of their new graduate ministers. In short, churches now want more from their ministers and ministers want more from their training, especially in the areas of spiritual leadership, mission and spirituality. The rediscovery of Catholic and Orthodox spirituality amongst Protestants and the emerging interest in Eastern spirituality more generally reveal a fascination birthed from a Protestantism which has, on the whole, been too cerebral, too success driven and too action oriented. Churches are now looking for leaders who can lead them into the mysteries of life in the Spirit, showing them how to know God, be authentically present in community and to serve their fellow man. They want their leaders to be fashioned more as a spiritual sage than as CEO or as aloof teacher of information.[33] They are seeking a more integrated spirituality where beliefs, values and lifestyle all converge. Without question, these movements and integrations are biblical themes.

At the same time, ministry students are arriving at seminary even less prepared, and with greater personal needs than in the past. While passionate and ready to serve, as products of contemporary culture they nevertheless often lack the basic habits and the outlook of Jesus which will support long-term spiritual leadership. They seek to lead towards Christ against the flow of secular culture without the solid spiritual underpinnings which such a venture requires. As Maas and O'Donnell well summarize, "Our seminaries are increasingly populated with people who come not knowing who they

[33] "Dorothy on Leadership" *Rev. Magazine*, November/December 2000, 3, http://www.brianmclaren.net/archives/imported/dorothy-on-leadership.html (accessed November 4, 2014).

are, because they do not know where they come from. .... What they do know is that they are spiritually hungry and they want to be spiritually fed."[34]

As the gap between who ministers actually are and who they and their churches want them to be apparently increases, it is not surprising that seminaries are being asked to respond. More attention must be placed on this growth need by seminaries placing formation at the center of the training experience. To do this consistently and sustainably, formation needs to find an equal footing in the curriculum, and ways must be found to overcome the various academic, structural and accreditation concerns to allow for this. Part Two of the doctoral project provides a theological and pedagogical foundation for this endeavor, offering Jesus' training approach as a basic framework upon which an effectual seminary training model may be based.

[34] Maas and O'Donnell, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church*, 12.

PART TWO

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

CHAPTER 3

A THEOLOGY OF PERSONAL FORMATION

When designing a process for spiritual formation in seminaries, it is important to consider the essential differences between this and other parts of the seminary curriculum. A lecturer cannot teach spiritual formation in the same way a church history lecturer may teach the Reformation or a biblical studies lecturer may teach the principles of exegesis. The essentially spiritual nature of personal formation has implications across the whole spectrum of the seminary program, from content, processes, lecturer roles and assessment. Common terms in seminaries, such as course, program and lecturer take on totally different meanings and roles. This chapter seeks to explore the theological foundations on which a spiritual formation process may be built. It argues that, as the name suggests, spiritual formation is primarily a spiritual task and as such progress in spiritual formation is the work of the Holy Spirit, with the human contribution being merely to facilitate a place where God may be heard and heeded. These theological principles provide a foundation for the pedagogy that will be outlined in Chapter 4.

Christians are called to a life "worthy of the calling (they) have received" (Ephesians 4:1). The word used for "worthy" is *axios*, meaning "of the same weight," and

adopts the imagery of scales used in the marketplace to convey a sense of equal balance. The word for "calling" is the Greek word *klesis* and when used in the New Testament, refers to the invitation extended freely by God of forgiveness and to salvation.[1] God's intention for his people, therefore, is that their lives come to match the splendor and richness of his love and grace as shown in salvation, or as Ephesians goes on to explain, that they "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

Jesus is used here as the goal of formation but in his ministry he is also the model of mature formation. He was not driven, either consciously or unconsciously, by his own needs: "for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me" (John 5:30) or enamored with his own brilliance: "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me" (John 7:16) and he ministered free from the need for recognition or acceptance: "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing" (John 8:54). As a result, he ministered always to the interests of others without his own needs getting in the way: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:28). His ministry stands as a model not just of what to do but also how to do it.

The trouble is that most ministers do not have the perfect personhood of Christ. In contrast, ministers are feeble humans just like those they serve. They are imperfectly formed by deficient upbringings and besieged by inadequate outlooks and attitudes. They are inclined to trust themselves and rather than see things God's way. They are given to

[1] For example Hebrews 3:1 and Philippians 3:14, which refer to our "heavenly calling" and in 2 Thessalonians 1:1-11 where the term "calling" is used interchangeably with the term "kingdom of God" in verse 5

action rather than reflection, and they have needs crying out to be filled and which often seek fulfilment in the wrong places. It is one thing to emulate Christ's ministry, but another thing altogether to have the Christlike character to fulfil it. Building this personhood of Christ in intentional and focused ways thus becomes the goal of a spiritual formation program for Christian leaders during training so that they may in some imperfect way both model and lead others into a life that matches the richness of their calling.

This is much broader than what is frequently termed *spirituality*, a word which does not occur in Scripture but is often used today to describe personal spiritual experience, frequently in mystical and individualistic terms. While personal spiritual practices and spiritual experiences undoubtedly play a vital role in spiritual formation, it is important to note that these are nourishing means to an end rather than the end in itself. The closest biblical word to spirituality is *pneumatikos,* meaning "spiritual", which is used in Scripture as both a verb and an adverb to describe all that comes from and is produced by the Spirit as he reveals and sustains the purposes of God. Rather than something experiential, it describes the essence of things that have their origin with God and are therefore in harmony with his character.

Therefore, the Bible links a lack of spirituality not to a deficiency in transcendent experience of God but rather to a lack of obedience. For example, Romans 7:14 says, "We know that the law is spiritual but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin." To make this dichotomy clear, other passages contrast spiritual with "worldly" as in 1 Corinthians 3:1; "Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly – mere infants in Christ." The purpose of spirituality then is to renew people into the spiritual beings God

created them to be, not in a transcendent sense but so as to walk in harmony with his character in order to please God.

Thus the term *personal spiritual formation* is quite broad, involving the unique and lifelong journey of each disciple to be renewed towards a character in harmony with God's character, one which is worthy of their calling. It is personal in the sense that each person's journey towards renewal and wholeness is unique, not because it is an individualistic endeavor. It is spiritual in the sense that it is ultimately the work of God, and the individual's task is merely to be receptive to hear, to listen and to respond. It is formation in the sense that the goal is to be fully formed from imperfect beings increasingly towards God's perfect calling into the image of God in which all mankind was created. The task of personal spiritual formation then is the journey towards a life worthy of the gift of salvation given through Jesus.

In developing a theology of spiritual formation, danger lurks in overestimating what human effort can achieve in an endeavor that is essentially spiritual. God's call to be saved and then to be spiritually reformed originates in him, is based on him and leads back to him. It does not reflect either the capacity or the performance of the called. As 1 Corinthians 1:26 teaches, "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the weak things of the world" and then goes on to conclude in verse 30: "It is because of [God] that you are in Christ Jesus." No allowance is made for any inherent human dignity or capability of being worthy of God's call to salvation: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 3:23). The initiative rests completely with God.

Nor is the calling conditional on the response of the called. God sent Jesus so that the called might live, but it was "not that we loved God, but that he loved us" (1 John 5:10). God's call is not an offer for two warring partners to meet in the middle seeking peace. It is founded solely on God's love and grace. In fact, Romans teaches that mankind is incapable of initiating any movement of reconciliation towards God: "For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all" (Romans 11:32). As a result, God's call is irrevocable Romans 11:29) because it is based on God's unchanging nature, not subject to man's response. This is God reaching out to establish "a covenant founded on love, not a contract based on legalities to get a mutual result."[2] Based only on God's love and grace, the unworthy have been granted access to the supremely worthy God, and invited to freely participate in his life-giving power at work in their lives to bring them to maturity.

As a result, God also provides the resources for spiritual formation into maturity. The writer to the Hebrews prays that "the God of peace…equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him" (Hebrews 13:21). The Greek word used for "equip" is *katartizo* and conveys the idea of being made fit, mended or restored to an original purpose. The imagery is that God wants to see his people put back into the proper condition according to God's original design but which has been marred by sin. *Katartizo* is also used in Ephesians 4:12 where God equips his people with

[2] Margaret Diddams, Lisa Klein Surdyk and Denise Daniels, "Rediscovering Models of Sabbath Keeping: Implications for Psychological Well Being," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 32 (1) (Spring 2004): 6.

gifts to help each other on the journey to restore the image of God in which mankind was created. Thus God provides both the resources for formation, but also the abilities to help each other on the road.

Thus an effective spiritual formation process then must acknowledge that in itself it is powerless to change anything. From beginning to end, spiritual formation is the work of God through his Spirit. As Jesus sums up to his disciples the essence of spiritual formation: "apart from me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). God provides the call, the model and the resources for spiritual formation and it is his love and grace which make the spiritual formation journey possible. Specifically, this occurs in three ways: God's love and grace initiate spiritual formation, love and grace motivate spiritual formation and love and grace enable spiritual formation.

Love and Grace as Initiators of Spiritual Formation

God does not choose to love humankind – he is love.[3] His very nature causes him to reach out to humanity to rescue it from the damage of sin. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God" (1 John 3:1). This love is not reciprocal, but based solely on God's innate character of love: "This is love: not that we loved him, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:10), and reveals the nature of real love: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). Thus God's love and grace are the starting point of formation without which the option would not even exist.

[3] 1 John 4:8

The initiative of God in spiritual formation is not general but deliberate and personal, based on his choice to love. “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world.... In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons ... In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us” (Ephesians 1:4-8). The inclination of mankind to become preoccupied with his own significance and achievements leaves God’s love and grace at best understated and at worst overlooked. So, to lift their gaze beyond themselves to the source of the spiritual life, Paul prays, “that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints and the incomparable great power for us to believe” (Ephesians 1:18-19).

This offer is a gesture by God so generous and undeserved that most people intuitively assume it is too good to be true and instinctively set about to earn it. Aware of their incapacity to be worthy, they take matters into their own hands, and turn spiritual formation into human effort. They use strategies like spiritual practices, asceticism, or religious performance or success to earn the right to participate in a gift which has already been freely given. However, the Bible makes it clear that no credit may be given to human capacity or effort. The spiritual life is God’s gift. “We were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions… For it is by grace that you have been

saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:4, 8-9).[4]

Therefore, it is essential to grasp the love nature of God's call to give spiritual formation its correct starting point. So before urging the Ephesians to live a life worthy of their calling he prays that they might first "have the power ... to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge" (Ephesians 3:17-18). Only when God's love and grace has been clearly grasped is the possibility of spiritual formation created. It is a prerequisite for the journey and defines it as a grateful response to God rather than something to earn his favor.

Love and Grace as Motivators of Spiritual Formation

The command to live worthy must not be taken out of context as a standalone statement. The Bible does not call followers just to "lift their game" against an arbitrary moral standard, so much as remind them of the status which God has bestowed on them in his love and in so doing inspiring them to make the choice to live lives which are worthy of it. It seeks to engage them willingly rather than forcibly, just as God himself does. Mark Stibbe describes it in a favorite metaphor, "a true Christian is not a person who is driven by whips, but drawn by cords of love."[5] To think of the command purely as a moral imperative misses the point. If Christians have been loved so deeply, before any advancement on their part - even before they knew they needed loving - then that inspires them to respond with a life of love.

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[4] c.f. Colossians 2:13: "When you were dead in your sins, God made you alive with Christ"

[5] Mark Stibbe, *From Orphans to Heirs* (Oxford: The Bible Reading Fellowship, 2005), 87.

However, the equilibrium of calling-of-love and life-of-love is frequently lost on both sides, with many preached theologies preferring one at the expense of the other. In Romans, Paul addresses people on both sides of the equation. First, he writes to the Jews who are proud of their efforts and judgmental of others that, by so doing, they "show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you to repentance" (Romans 2:4). A focus on obedience without a corresponding awareness of the calling of love and grace leads to entrapment in either Pharisaism on the one hand or shame on the other. By ignoring the call of love, life becomes slavery to law. The Bible is clear that this life can never succeed: "All who rely on observing the law are under a curse" (Galatians 3:10). To those Jews seeking salvation and relief from the unremitting demands of the law he explains the alternative; "Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into the grace in which we now stand" (Romans 5:1-2). The message is clear that if love and grace are overlooked by relying on adherence to the law, then Jesus' entire mission was a waste of time; "I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing" (Galatians 2:21).

On the other hand, a focus on grace without a grasp of its cost leads to the spiraling emptiness of unsatisfied desire. By ignoring Jesus' sacrifice of love, life becomes slavery to selfish craving. It dismisses the work of God and leads to laxity. Peter describes how this then leads to corruption (2 Peter 1:4), then to slavery (2 Peter 2:19), and ultimately to emptiness (1Peter 1:18). He describes the extent of the danger: "If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:20-21). So Paul warns; "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live it any longer?" (Romans 6:1-2). God's love and grace certainly demand a response, but it is demanded not by fear or obligation, but by gratefulness.

Maintaining this correct motivation appears to be harder than it seems. Issues of personality, culture and upbringing all contribute to a bias either way, easily upsetting the equilibrium. Some in New Testament churches took the grace of God to mean that they were free to live as they pleased,[6] while others failed to grasp the fullness of grace and continued working to please God as though still under the law.[7] To accept the calling without living the corresponding life is hypocrisy. To attempt a worthy life without a grasp of the calling is religion. Both are inadequate, self-centered views of love and grace. The first ignores the purpose of God's love and grace and is essentially dismissive. The second ignores the results of grace, and is essentially self-serving. These same deviations of balance are still experienced by Christians and churches today when they fail to fully take hold of God's love and grace.

Jesus describes both sides of this imbalance in the parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15) where, as Stibbe observes, both boys could live as sons but both chose to live as

[6] For example, James 2:14: "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?"

[7] For example, Galatians 3:3: "After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?"

slaves.[8] By squandering his inheritance, the lost son became a slave to hedonism (2 Peter 2:18-19). By demeaning his inheritance, the older son became a slave to legalism. Both failed to live worthy of their calling because they failed to grasp the love and grace of their father. A similar imbalance today can leave spiritual formation as either an irrelevance or a form of slavery. Again in Stibbe's words, "the Father wants sons, not slaves. Some, it seems, remain in chains."[9]

As Jesus' parable teaches, the answer for both sons is found not within themselves, but in the father's grace and love. "The father chooses to address both of them as his sons thereby wooing them towards that place where they no longer have to strive for, or against, his affections, but simply rest and rejoice in the knowledge that their father loves them."[10] God's love and grace does the same for his children today. Galatians explains "So you are no longer a slave, but a son" (Galatians 4:7). God, by his own hand, has restored his intended family relationship with his children, drawing out of them not the obligation of a slave but rather the aspirations of a deeply loved child to become spiritually formed.

As the parable depicts, perhaps the motivational implications of God's love and grace are best summed up in the biblical picture of adoption. Mankind is naturally a slave to sin, but God sent Jesus to "redeem those under the law that we might receive the full rights of sons" (Galatians 4:5). A child does not choose its parents in the process of adoption, and so our adoption by God is entirely his initiative by his loving choice, not by

[8] Stibbe, *From Orphans to Heirs*, 102.

[9] Ibid., 111.

[10] Ibid., 102.

merit. “In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will” (Ephesians 1:5). The only qualification for adoption is to be a child in need of rescue.

Now the adoption has been formalized, the relationship of father and son becomes legal and permanent. Now “the child is certain that his father is for him rather than against him . . . This is the essence of sonship.”[11] The child may want and try to please the father, but this is not needed to make him love the child any more. The relationship of acceptance in adoption is permanent, and liberates the child from the need to earn it or find belonging. Instead he is free to life with abandon in the security of his new status with God.

Love and Grace as Enablers of Spiritual Formation

The Bible assures that no amount of human effort is enough to bring people to God: “For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law” (Galatians 3:21). In fact, dependence on human effort leaves the individual in a worse position than when he began. As Jesus taught, “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 10:39). Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich describe the impotence of self-effort in spiritual formation succinctly: “We go back for more and more. We strive so hard to be loved for what we have done rather than for who we are. We are ultimately very lonely

[11] Stibbe, *From Orphans to Heirs*, 103.

people."[12] The reason God's love and grace are so enabling is that they free people from themselves.

Firstly, love and grace enable spiritual formation by allowing Christians to face the truth about themselves. One product of sin since the time of Adam and Eve is mankind's felt need to hide from himself and from others (Genesis 3:10). It is the instinctive reaction of those who know deep down that they are not what they wish they were, nor what they should be. The suspicion of inadequacy, the fear of rejection and the need for approval all lie deep at the heart of mankind and the ramifications of this have continued to play out in human endeavor every day since. Without an adequate grasp of God's love, mankind becomes a slave to needs and fears, instead of recipients of grace.

In contrast, the love and grace of God are the antidote to mankind's deepest need of hiding from the truth and thus enable the individual to embark on the spiritual formation journey. God, who is the source of love (1 John 4:7), sent Jesus who "came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). In that action, God offers acceptance despite knowing the full truth about mankind. Striving and hiding are disarmed and made redundant. Despite God's full knowledge of the truth behind the masks of mankind, he does not change his view or limit his offer of love. Jesus' call to "Come to me" stops the hiders in their tracks, as he offers "rest for your souls" to those "weary and burdened" by the failures of self-efforts to make spiritual progress (Matthew 11:28).

[12] Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich, *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith* (Salem: Sheffield Publishing Company, 2005), 82.

For a person to pretend to be someone they are not saps enormous energy, and demands constant vigilance. Yet without love and grace, for many people this is preferable to facing the truth. Maintaining a facade seems the only solution, regardless of how exhausting it is, because to be vulnerable would risk the collapse of a contrived identity which is merely a house of cards. God's love offers an alternative: the freedom to face the truth without despair. Jesus' combination of grace and truth makes self-discovery possible. Nothing anyone can find out about themselves can change God's mind about them because he already knows about it, so they can find the courage to face the facts. Such personal integrity is the starting point for spiritual formation. Hagberg and Guelich write, "Acceptance means embracing ourselves, celebrating the full range of humanness, embracing ... the lonely lover.... the insecure boy ... the perfectionist. If we do not embrace these parts, they will dominate us. By denying them, they become gods to us and control us. By embracing them we mean to listen to what these qualities are telling us about ourselves."[13]

So a healthy person is one for whom God's love has so assured them of their acceptance, that they may pursue the spiritual formation journey without fear of what they may find. Their weaknesses are no longer something to hide but instead become opportunities for a loving God to be at work. In fact these weaknesses do not even constitute limitations, since they are merely the jars of clay in which God's treasure dwells.[14] So James counsels; "Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up"

[13] Hagberg and Guelich, *The Critical Journey,* 121.

[14] 2 Corinthians 4:7.

(James 4:10). However, the urge to hide is strong and the sinful nature can resist the façade being dismantled. “God's extravagant grace is always offensive to the Pharisee in us. The religious spirit demands that we live as slaves. The Holy Spirit woos us into resting in the Savior’s arms of love.”[15]

Secondly, God’s love and grace enable spiritual formation by meeting people as they are in all their weakness rather than waiting for them to become strong. Crabb observes that “God's spirit leads to self-discovery, which generates brokenness, deepens humility and energizes dependence and gratitude.”[16] This allows people to face the truth about themselves as a starting point of spiritual formation rather than cover up an unworthy life of need. In fact, contrary to the natural human instinct to present a good image, it turns out that “brokenness is the key to freedom.”[17] As Paul discovered about his own weakness, God’s answer is that “my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). This explains why “bad people loved to hang out with Jesus but good people wanted to kill him.”[18]

Love and grace turn brokenness into an invigorating growing space which is both authentic yet safe. They support the courage to face reality while still being optimistic about the future. They rescue mankind from the need to win the approval of God, others and themselves because God has already given his approval – approval not

[15] Stibbe, *From Orphans to Heirs*, 79.

[16] Ibid., 156

[17] Ibid.

[18] Jack Frost, *Experiencing Father’s Embrace*, (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 2007), 86.

based on merit but on God's choice to love. As Jesus explains, "As the Father has loved me so have I loved you" (John 15:9). Jesus goes on to explain the roles of the person who receives this love: in regard to themselves, "Now remain in my love" (John 15:9) and in regard to others, "Love each other as I have loved you" (John 15:11). This context of love and authenticity, and of grace and truth, is the foundation for facilitating spiritual formation.

Ironically, when the spiritual formation journey allows people to see themselves as they really are, it can seem like a backward step. "Wholeness looks a lot like weakness at this stage. It does not make us stronger; it allows God to work through our weakness."[19] However, this self-awareness is a critical step in healthy ministries, and it is only God's love and grace that enable the courage to face reality and the safety to accept support. A team of researchers into pastoral resiliency led by Katherine Rhoads found that pastors who experience and rely on God's love and grace find that it gives them "security in knowing that God is propelling them forward and will honor his promise to sustain them. They are more likely to recognize their own limitations and realize that some situations are beyond human capacity to solve."[20] Love and grace turn weakness into trigger for growth instead of a need to hide.

Interestingly, research on the effectiveness of coping mechanisms also supports the idea that accepting weaknesses is actually a strength. According to a study by McDonald Wong, people who relied on self-effort and self-mastery as a coping style

[19] Hagberg and Guelich, *The Critical Journey*, 135.

[20] Katheryn Meek Rhoads et al., "Maintaining Personal Resiliency: Lessons Learned from Evangelical Protestant Clergy." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 31 (4) (Winter 2003): 344.

actually produced the lowest scores for satisfaction. In contrast, lower anxiety and greater self-esteem resulted from a coping style which focused on trust in a loving God.[21] This the researchers dubbed the "surrender" style, in reference to the dependence modelled by Jesus on the Father in Matthew 26.39: "Not as I will but you will." The researchers concluded; "Contrary to the human fear of losing control, giving up one's life to God contributes to well-being."[22]

Thirdly, love and grace enable spiritual formation by providing forgiveness and a fresh start. They remove the fear of judgement because God's unmerited love has already offered forgiveness. Jesus "did not come to judge the world but to save it" (John 12:47). Incredibly, mankind is free to fail without risking his status with God. His grace is great enough to forgive any sin, because "where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (Romans 5:20). This means that no failure is final in God's assessment, and that all sinners, no matter how bad they are, may find forgiveness and a fresh start. Contrary to the tendency of people to pass judgement on themselves, God does not sit in judgement as "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

Fourthly, God's love and grace enable spiritual formation by allowing Christians to come confidently into his presence to be renewed. All people, no matter how broken or how bad, are welcomed into God's redeeming presence without reference to their emotional, moral or physical state, but only on the basis of God's calling of love and grace. It is him "who is able to... present you before his glorious presence without fault

[21] McDonald Wong, "Surrender to God: An Additional Coping Style?" *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 28 (Summer 2000): 159.

[22] Ibid.

and with great joy."[23] Without the need to earn God's approval, Christians are free to enjoy his presence without fear or obligation. As a result, Hebrews explains that now "we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body" (Hebrews 10:19). So the writer urges, "let us draw near to God in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience" (Hebrews 10:22). The presence of a holy God, which would normally be a place of fear and judgement, has become a place of refreshment and renewal because of God's love and grace.

This is a particularly pertinent enabler of formation in a ministry training program due to the emotional and personal demands of a helping profession where personal faith and vocational life easily become entangled. Studies show that a sense of closeness to God has a significant impact on emotional health and coping ability in ministry. Golden et al found that there was a direct relationship between closeness to God and fulfilment in ministry: "the less one feels in intimate relationship with the divine, the greater the likelihood of burnout."[24] Similarly, the research team led by Rhoads lists closeness to God as one of the two central themes for thriving in ministry.[25] The ability to come into God's presence to be renewed is an essential habit of formation to be established during the years of training.

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[23] Jude 24

[24] Jonathon Golden et al. "Spirituality and Burnout: An Incremental Validity Study." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 32 (2) (Summer 2004): 123.

[25] Rhoads et al., Op. cit., 342. The second theme was intentionality, specifically as it relates to life balance, realistic expectations and interconnectedness

As Jesus went up on a mountainside to pray after significant ministry,[26] ministers too need times of recovery in God's presence. Such access to God is only possible because his love and grace have opened a new way into his presence: "He died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him" (1 Thess. 5:10). His presence is refreshing because sensing his companionship on the journey is a source of inner strength and provides refocus on God's priorities. It satisfies the human need for significance, and encourages simplicity and contentment. As generations of Christian contemplatives have found, "the more of God we have, the less of everything else we need."[27]

Lastly, God's love and grace enable spiritual formation by creating the possibility of intimacy in human relationships. Unlike human love, God's love is not changeable or dependent on our response. His love does not take a bruising, withdraw in hurt or turn on the other when it is offended. This kind of love gives a guarantee that no other relationship can have: it meets the need for love without the fear of rejection. A person secure in their knowledge of being loved by God is more able to trust others with their true selves, and thus experience deeper intimacy. As they experience the acceptance of God even though he knows their deepest parts, they learn to trust others with those deep parts also. Jack Frost comments, "deeply intimate relationships with other people are only possible between individuals who are secure in God's love... As soon as distance from God's unconditional love and security begin to occur, intimacy with others thus

[26] Matthew 14:23.

[27] Hagberg and Guelich, *The Critical Journey*, 155.

becomes very difficult because we treat others in same way we feel about ourselves."[28] As the Bible concisely phrases it, "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

God's love and grace both model and compel ways of relating which foster intimacy as they are progressively grasped, building a firm foundation for spiritual formation. Psychological researcher Wong concludes: "The way believers think about and relate to God will shape their perceptions of the world and affect their behaviors."[29] For example, God's love shows people how to forgive. "Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13). In contrast, imperfect humans may keep acting in ways which threaten intimacy because "hurt people hurt people."[30] However, God's love and grace give the possibility of a new kind of relating for believers, one not based on the natural tendencies of hiding, performance, retaliation, and control, but based on God's character. Given the central role of a shared ministry using God-given gifts in the process of becoming properly equipped for ministry as described earlier, the provision of intimacy is therefore a vital step in any spiritual formation process.

So the love and grace of God are the initiators, motivators and enablers of personal spiritual formation A life of greatness is made possible not because of any inherent untapped nobility or ability in the person, but because of the greatness of God's love and grace. A grasp of this love, extended to mankind before the creation of the world

[28] Frost, *Experiencing Father's Embrace*, 82.

[29] Wong, "Surrender to God," 319.

[30] Frost, Op. cit., 105.

(Ephesians 1:4), and thus by definition, before it could possibly be earned, show the importance of spiritual formation in God's mind. It then motivates the Christian to respond willingly rather than by obligation or fear. It then equips the Christian to risk the spiritual formation journey and does the work of spiritual formation inside each person as they do.

So as the name suggests, spiritual formation is primarily a spiritual task and as such, progress in spiritual formation is God's work through the Holy Spirit. He is active in all stages of the spiritual formation journey, starting with initiation into God's family: "The Spirit you received does not make you slaves so you live in fear again; rather the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship" (Romans 8:15). Then he continues to motivate spiritual growth; "those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires" (Romans 8:5). Finally, he supports and enables that growth; He "lives with you and is in you" (John 14:17b) in order to "help you and be with you forever" (John 14:16b). The human contribution to the spiritual formation journey is thus merely to facilitate a place where God may be heard and heeded.

Perhaps the various roles of the person and the Spirit in spiritual formation are best summed up in Jesus' parable of the sower in Matthew 13. Progress in spiritual formation first requires a person to soften the hardness of their heart to hear and understand what God requires. Then a person needs time and process to allow the Word to take root deeply so that perseverance builds through times of challenge. Lastly a person needs to constantly take stock of priorities and attitudes to ensure the Word maintains the priority it deserves. The Word of God reaches out to everyone, but the outcome depends on the receptivity of the person, as pictured by the rich, soft, well prepared soil which

allows spiritual formation to flourish. Tilling this soil is the human element of a spiritual formation process.

CHAPTER 4

A PEDAGOGY FOR PERSONAL FORMATION

Having established the theological principles for personal spiritual formation, the thorny issue of what educational practices will best facilitate formation within a seminary context must now be defined. This has traditionally been a point of weakness in seminary program design where more often than not, good intentions about formation have not been translated into effective processes. In 2013, the Sydney College of Divinity[1] commissioned a study of its member institutions to test the widespread claims of commitment to student transformation during training against the aspirations and actual experience of students, faculty and stakeholders. The study showed that, despite their varied philosophical and institutional bases, the curriculum documentation of the different member institutions shared substantial commonality in describing the intended formational outcomes. However, it also concluded that throughout the past thirty five years, these institutions also shared a similarly limited development of basic aims, content

[1] The Sydney College of Divinity (hereafter, SCD) is an accreditation body comprising several theological institutions in Australia, known as member institutes, which work cooperatively to manage and moderate issues of a tertiary education nature such as accreditation and course design, educational and academic standards, research and professional development. ACOM is a member institute of the SCD.

and structures to facilitate such formation.[2] This chapter aims to help bridge this gap by outlining some pedagogical principles to provide the missing aims, content and structures of an effective formational experience. For the sake of clarity, these principles have been grouped into three categories, namely, relational, extra-rational and experiential.

Relational Pedagogies

Spiritual formation is often seen as an inner journey, to be tended to mostly alone. Ironically, the Bible describes spiritual formation as something that happens in the context of relationship, where "speaking the truth in love we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). Therefore, it is God's design that "the Christian life is not just our own private affair" and in fact "the solitary Christian is a contradiction in terms."[3] By their very nature, relationships expose and reflect a deeper reality about a person to themselves, no matter how uncomfortable it may be. They uncover those parts of the personhood in need of formation but which may otherwise remain a mystery to those too afraid, too blind or just too busy to notice. It is in relationship that people discover who they really are. As Henri Nouwen explains, "We need spiritual friends to help us with our capacity for self-deception"[4]

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[2] Les Ball, *Transforming Theology: Student Experience and Transformative Learning in Undergraduate Theological Education*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 9.

[3] Richard Peace, *Learning to Love God* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998), 59-61.

[4] Henri Nouwen, *Spiritual direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006) quoted in Strawn and Hammer, "Spiritual Formation through Direction at Fuller Theological Seminary School of Psychology," 308.

Relationships also act as an interpreter of events encountered on the journey of life, and in so doing, turn them into opportunities for spiritual and personal growth. Psychologist Robert Watson describes life events as "developmental lines that cut across domains of relational experience."[5] However, these developmental lines, and their inherent opportunities for growth, are easily squandered without relationships to help process and make sense of them. Thus, relationships play a key role as both revealer and interpreter in the personal formation journey. Some specific ways in which relational pedagogies may be employed in a formational strategy in seminary training follow.

A Community of Trust

A community of trust is a central context for spiritual formation because it addresses "our tendencies towards individualism and self-absorption"[6] and augments and gives structure to the revealing and interpreting capacity of relationships. Communities by their very nature augment the opportunities for self-reflection and discovery through a multiplicity of interactions and viewpoints. Through various well-managed group processes, communities can broaden and deepen self-knowing of group members. They help an individual clarify and distil potential growth trajectories and act as a collective guiding voice on the formational journey. As David Augsburger concludes, "we find ourselves and form a self in community."[7]

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[5] Robert A. Watson, "Toward union in love: The Contemplative Spiritual Tradition and Contemporary Psychoanalytic Theory in the Formation of Persons," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 28.4 (Winter 2000), 282.

[6] Phil Howard, "A Psychospiritual Model of Spiritual Formation," *Christian Education Journal* 3.2 (Fall 2006), 230-239.

[7] David Augsburger, *Dissident Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 74.

Communities also provide the context for the exercise of God's gifts to one-another which, as the Bible teaches, are given "so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:12). As Jesus pointed out to the religious people of the day, knowing spiritual truths does not constitute spirituality unless that knowledge is acted upon (Luke 11:37-54), and communities provide the support and accountability to put Spirit-revealed self-knowledge into practice. Thus, they are envisaged by God to be creative spaces for his Spirit to work towards the spiritual formation of each member, as group members apply their spiritual gifts in ministry to one-another. So the Bible explains, "To each one, the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7).

However, due to the human tendency to hide, these communities need to be distinguished by deep levels of trust in order for people to find the courage to explore their journeys honestly and in depth. Trust allows group members to heed the challenge and impulse to grow, the courage to face the needed change and the support and accountability to make the change stick. Trust allows people to engage with one another's lives authentically rather than at mere surface level and creates a safe place for individuals to explore daunting realities about themselves. Therefore, building trust becomes an essential starting point for effective community.

The problem, as Doug Pagitt observes, is that today, authentic communities marked by trust are something of a lost art,[8] and need to be intentionally created. Building trust needs robust processes and careful guidance, as it takes much time to build yet only

[8] Pagitt, *Reimagining Spiritual Formation*, 159.

a moment to destroy. Once built, the resulting depth of personal sharing in a community of trust needs to be honored, respected and protected. This is best done through confidentiality commitments and group covenants voluntarily agreed by the group, and these all need careful managing and training.

Modelling

As most people will attest when considering the key influences in their life, many life lessons are better caught than taught. Words are usually forgotten, but a life lived well leaves a longer impression. Good modelling provides a tangible example of spiritual theories, integrating spirituality with life and inspiring commitment for the journey. In the same way, Jesus' call was not to theories or rules but to "Follow me!" (Mark 2:14). Clearly Jesus intended the shared life with his disciples to be a learning experience at least as compelling as his teaching, if not more.

Leaders of spiritual formation need not be perfect, but must model an authentic spiritual formation journey. Parker J. Palmer writes "Our students need to see how we, their elders, deal with the vagaries of fate while refusing to sell out either our professions or our own identity and integrity. And they need to see how, when we fail and fall down, as everyone does, we manage to get up again."[9] Fellow travelers also have a modelling influence on formation. When life stories and experiences are shared in formational communities, all those who share the journey also benefit, and grow a little themselves.

[9] Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: Education as Spiritual Journey* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1993), 211.

Holism

A spiritual formation pedagogy must focus on transforming the whole self in relationship to others, not just on addressing what are often thought of as inner spiritual needs. Often the mind and spirit are seen in a competitive hierarchy operating on different levels and with little bearing on how life is lived. However, human souls are not disembodied, but rather integrated beings with minds, relationships, psychologies, bodies, and emotions all interlinked. One part of this personal ontological web of being cannot be healthy while the other remains sick. Unsettledness in any area of a person's life will inescapably effect the whole and will limit spiritual formation until it is addressed.

Spiritual formation is therefore interested in more than just spiritual practices, knowledge or experiences. Spirituality is not detached from real life but deeply interconnected with all that makes someone who they are. David Benner's psychosocial model of spiritual nurture and growth uses the term *soulcare*, a word which could be interposed with spiritual formation, and defines it as "the support and restoration of the wellbeing of persons in their depth and totality"[10] An effective formation process must be holistically responsive to whatever personal and relational issues are raised, and include healing in that area as part of the formative task.

Individuality

At the same time, this will be balanced with a resolute respect for the individual and their formational predilection. People grow at different paces and exist in different states of readiness and willingness to grow in their personhood. Groups and leaders must

[10] David Benner, *The Care of Souls,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), .2.

fight the need to "fix" one another and instead embrace the mystery of the journey towards growth with the same "esteeming love"[11] with which God loves each soul. Certainly, members must avoid the temptation to solve their own destinies, but worse still is the attempt to solve the destinies of others. For as Palmer describes it, "The human Soul does not want to be fixed - it wants to be seen and heard."[12]

In order to respect this individuality, groups will need to resist the tendency to rush in with advice and instead, learn to be comfortable with silence. As Edwards describes, they will need to provide the "advocacy of a prayerful presence to each other - not psychological or theological analysis" which "sometimes just needs to be trusted as right for them at a particular time."[13] They need to create space for God to meet the individual at the center of their being without the interruption of shallow advice or pre-emptive attempts to rescue.

Spiritual formation is a tension between a painful emptying and a grateful repackaging of the personhood, and each person's journey must be allowed to take its course under God's direction rather than its own. Formation is not a linear process of consistent progress, but rather a self-discovery of ever deepening awareness of need. As Taylor and Tillich explain:

> As does any other form of self-integration, the personal moves between the poles of self-identity and self-alteration. Integration is the state of balance between them, disintegration the disruption of this balance. Both trends are always effective in actual life processes under the conditions of existential estrangement. Personal life is ambiguously pulled between forces of essential centeredness and

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[11] Gerald May, *The Dark Night of the Soul* (HarperSanFrancisco: 2004), 130.

[12] Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*, 44.

[13] Edwards, *Living in the Presence*, 136 -137.

> existential disruption. There is no moment in a personal life process in which one or the other force is exclusively dominant.[14]

Spiritual formation processes must allow for a certain ambiguity on the journey and not see each struggle or change as a backward step. Every person's journey is unique and unpredictable and deserves to be honored. Therefore, a spiritual formation process cannot be prescriptive about either the content or the journey of formation.

Extra-rational Pedagogies

While spiritual formation must by definition move trainees beyond the rational to the extra rational, sometimes educational presuppositions and cognitive learning processes work against this. Tertiary educational in particular is usually based on "an assumed anthropology of persons as thinking beings. The assumption is that if persons think correctly they will act correctly."[15] Likewise, the church has sometimes formulized or rationalized spiritual formation into a set of beliefs or practices in guide behavior but without the necessary accompanying spiritual understanding. In contrast, Karen Campbell defines the extra rational as a "spiritual-integrative" approach which uses "methods of transformative learning that do not rely on cognition."[16] This is designed to stimulate those inner places beyond the reach of cognitive effort which nonetheless shape human identity. Educationalist James Smith explains: "We are narrative, liturgical desiring

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[14] Mark Kline Taylor and Paul Tillich, *The Making of Modern Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress press. 1991), 245.

[15] Strawn and Hammer, "Spiritual Formation through Direction at Fuller Theological Seminary School of Psychology," 305.

[16] Karen Campbell, *Transformative Learning and Spirituality: A Heuristic Inquiry into the Experience of Spiritual Learning* (Doctoral Thesis at Capella University, ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 2010, 3397217), 8 & 31.

animals whose actions and orientation to the world are driven much more by precognitive imaginative construals of the world than by cognitive, intellectual perceptions of the world."[17] Some extra-rational pedagogical principles to employ in a seminary formation strategy follow.

Wonder

Recent studies have shown that the emotion of wonder has a transformative capacity to lift a person's mind and heart beyond the analytical to the figurative. Wonder has the capacity to draw a person out from a preoccupation with everyday concerns to higher-order abstract thought and to "contemplate ever-more general orders of existence."[18] It moves from a convergent mindset which focuses on facts and the here-and-now to a divergent mindset which imagines possibilities, sees patterns and synthesizes meaning. It opens the heart to deal more courageously with the dangerous matter of personhood change and growth. As Parker Palmer describes, it helps a person to practice "soft eyes when faced with a dangerous new stimulus instead of narrow eyes ready for fight or flight. This is what happens when we gaze on sacred reality."[19]

In a formation process, wonder also motivates and facilitates a person to meet God in more visceral ways. It "awakens a sense of mystery, causes trust and a sense of

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[17] James. K.A. Smith, "Keeping Time in the Social Sciences: An Experiment with Fixed-Hour Prayer," in D. I. Smith & J.K.A. Smith, eds. *Teaching and Christian practices: Reshaping faith & learning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eardmans, 2011), 140.

[18] Robert C. Fuller, "Spirituality in the Flesh: The Role of Discrete Emotions in Religious Life," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (March 1, 2007), 40, http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=7&sid=45ce1e7c-8f0a-42cd-b557-c35eb960d63c%40sessionmgr112&hid=120 (accessed 12th July 2014).

[19] Palmer, *Courage to Teach,* 113.

belonging . . . establishing true mutuality with a wider sphere of life."[20] It is the implementation of the biblical injunction to "set your hearts on things above . . . set your minds on things above" (Colossians 3:1-2) so that a person may be buoyed and formed by the wonder of God's reality rather than weakened or hardened with cynicism about the world.

Closely related is mystery, which moves a person deeper in the same way that way wonder moves a person higher. Making space and opportunities for mystery and wonder in formation will enable access to the soul, giving it both room to breathe and space to speak. Researcher William Martin advises: "Never forget the mystery. Your rational education is a great gift, but it will never reveal the depths of the Spirit to you, or anyone else."[21] Thus, as well as an inwardly reflective dimension, effective formation processes will create opportunities to experience God in ways which sense his glory and arouse wonder at the larger spiritual reality in which God has invited us to participate.

Liturgy

A formation process can create, or perhaps adapt from the past, liturgies for today which are meaningful to the group as ways to get beyond the cognitive function and instead tap into the narrative and imaginative drivers of human identity and action. Liturgy may use imagination, stories, archetypes, symbols, images or myths, designed to facilitate the precognitive transformation of the person towards God. Eventually, the

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[20] Palmer, *Courage to Teach*,, p41.

[21] William C. Martin, quoted in David Giuliano, "The Way of the Wild Dog" in *Clergy Journal*. Vol. 82 No.1 (Oct 2005): 10-12. http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/ pdfviewer?vid=4&sid= ba7a7156-77cf-47ea-90a6-56b33e80840a%40sessionmgr4001&hid=4109 (accessed 18th August 2014).

cognitive functions will fall into line, having grown and been transformed themselves in ways rational thought may not achieve.

Although common in the early church, liturgy is less-well known in contemporary protestant churches, where there is often resistance against liturgies which are taken to be somewhat routine and devoid of meaning. In contrast, Maas and O'Donnell note that the reason for importance of liturgy in the early church was that "its symbolism was understood - even if elaborate. It was still within the grasp of most ordinary people."[22] However, the emergence of postmodernism and its search for meaning and symbolism has seen an increased interest in liturgy in protestant circles. Some examples of liturgies in resurgence are meditation and the sacraments, confession, chanting and the blessing. Others, such as iconography and labyrinths, are examples that may require more of a stretch, but nonetheless could be integrated into formation processes at seminary to provide compelling extra-rational awareness and stimulus to growth.

Spiritual Disciplines

Spiritual disciplines are also a form of liturgy quite common in protestant circles and easily integrated into formation processes at seminary. Personal formation is an essentially reflective process and disciplines bring structure, focus and intensity to that reflection to enhance growth. They combat the busyness of life which serves to make people less able to notice when God speaks. As Gerald May explains, "We experience

[22] Maas and O'Donnell, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church*, 31.

(God's invitations) more often than we think, but ignore them because they are over so quickly and because we can't make anything of them. Part of the spiritual journey is coming to recognize such moments and to savor and claim them."[23] Spiritual disciplines create the space and attention to listen to God and will be a central part of a spiritual formation strategy.

Spiritual disciplines also give focus to the space they create, thus utilizing it intentionally for formation. Benedictine nun, Joan Chittister, observes, "I become contemplative, not by sitting and waiting but by listening and waiting."[24] Disciplines tune in to God's work in each life, noticing the movement of the Holy Spirit and enabling better cooperation with God's in spiritual formation.

Prayer and Contemplative Bible reading

Many students arrive at seminary with poorly established habits of devotional and meditative Bible study which will sustain them in future ministry. Biblical literacy needs to be matched with "heart literacy" which provides the desire for, the value of and the ability to interact at a spiritual level with Scripture. Meditating in Scripture during meditative Bible reading also allows for the careful reading of Scripture while avoiding "the extremes of dry scholasticism and irresponsible subjectivism."[25] Contemplative prayer allows for deep listening to God while actively limiting other voices.

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[23] May, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, 185.

[24] Joan Chittister, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily* (HarperSanFrancisco,1991), 107.

[25] Richard Peace, *Contemplative Bible Study* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998), 18.

An effective spiritual formation process will provide an orientation to and experience in the rich contemplative tradition that has been preserved largely by Catholic and Orthodox traditions, while generally overlooked by Protestants. Particular attention to contemplative Bible reading will balance the cognitive work with the Bible in other parts of the trainee's course. These contemplative Bible reading experiences will be student led, to develop the skill of recognizing God's voice though Scripture without falling into theological shortcomings like proof-texting, personalizing and allegorizing.

Experiential Pedagogies

Effective pedagogy takes a holistic perspective of the learning experience, responding to the specific student, teacher, environment and content as a total system. Piaget believed that human development occurs through "the process of equilibrium (i.e. an imbalance between mental structures and experiences),"[26] making education an essentially experiential process where existing epistemological webs are challenged and expanded by non-conforming experiences. Dewey likewise perceived of education as "a continuing reconstruction of experience."[27] These principles are central to a pedagogy of spiritual formation, given its essentially personal and life-related objectives. As will be explored in detail in the next Chapter, this was also Jesus' approach to spiritual formation, where he sent his disciples out and then brought them together again to discuss what they had discovered about themselves and others (for example, Luke 9:1-10). As David

[26] R. Bybee and R. Sund, *Piaget for Educators* (Columbus, Oh: Merrill Publishing, 1983), 211.

[27] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 128.

Augsburger summarizes, "True spirituality is a spirituality of the road."[28] Some suggested experiential pedagogies for a seminary-based formation process follow.

Kinesthetic Processes

A significant step on the path to spiritual formation is the ability to face reality through increased self-awareness. However, self-awareness can be hard won, requiring various defense and coping mechanisms such as denial, busyness or rationalization to be broken down to see the truth. Kinesthetic processes have the capacity to cut through such defense mechanisms by using non-cerebral processes to challenge what are essentially cerebral constructs. Spiritual formation at seminary will therefore be assisted by kinesthetic processes and action-reflection methodologies which balance a trainee's cognitive growth with self-discovery.

Authentic experience of the real self will motivate change and growth faster than feedback, advice or teaching from others. It causes a person to grasp their need for growth at a heart level rather than just a cerebral level and this stimulates an urgent self-motivation to change. It facilitates a person to take responsibility for their own development needs instead of dispensing control to others or deferring the needed change through rationalization and compensatory mental constructs of reality.

Designing such a spiritual formation process requires the construction of a creative learning experience in both individual and group contexts. These can allow a person under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discover the wisdom within. They are

[28] Augsburger, *Dissident Discipleship,* 22.

contexts for the self-discovery of new strategies for dealing with blockages and self-defeating attitudes which cognitive approaches have previously failed to do.

This requires the leader of a formation process to step back out of the limelight and allow the Holy Spirit to be center stage. As Parker J. Palmer explains, leaders need to "spend less time filling the space with data and my own thoughts and more time opening a space where students can have a conversation with the subject."[29] This means resisting the temptation to rush in to fill the knowledge gaps and awkward silences. It means keeping the attention on those being spiritually formed rather than on demonstrating knowledge or prowess as a leader. This will leave room to grasp and cooperate with the unique work of the Holy Spirit in a trainee's growth, which is so vital in the imprecise and non-rational sphere of personal formation.

Such kinesthetic and action-reflection processes require careful management of group processes by the formation leader. Groups of well-meaning people can easily descend into counselling or ill-informed group therapy, replete with advice-giving and problem-solving which stymies, rather than facilitates, growth. Where significant mental or emotional issues arise, these are outside the remit of spiritual formation processes at a seminary and should be referred to professionals or specialist mentoring. However, with these limitations in mind, well led experiential group processes have significant transformational potential when combined with a praying, listening and gifted community in a space where God is allowed to do his work.

[29] Palmer, *Courage to Teach,* 120.

Reflection

Personal formation is an essentially reflective process. Yet reflection is an increasingly rare commodity as modern lifestyles drive people more to action. Technology keeps people permanently online, constantly distracted, widely networked and always switched-on, with expectations about availability, productivity and fast response times which serve to make people both too busy and less able to notice their own lives, let alone when God speaks. By its very nature, reflection is not only a powerful antidote to busyness but also an essential step to self-awareness of personal spiritual growth needs. In a fast-paced seminary environment with its schedules, syllabuses and deadlines, reflection provides islands of space to attend to the bigger issues of spiritual life and to personally integrate the learning from the wider curriculum.

Consequently, reflective processes to carefully observe life and one another will be a core element in a spiritual formation strategy. Tools to enable reflection and encourage listening, such as reflective questions, journaling and retreats, will be central processes. Reflection will be frequently built around planned activities to see what may be gleaned from the experience or discern how God is leading. This will help each person maintain a realistic grasp on priorities and spiritual growth. Reflection will also be used to help each person contribute equally to the formational community by slowing down the conversation and ensuring the most talkative in the group don't become thought leaders by default. It ensures that inner thoughts get some air time to facilitate growth and that each person notices the movement of the Holy Spirit and is therefore better cooperate with God's work.

Time

Transformation is a slow process, with progress made in fits and starts. Educational theory confirms that; "basic attitude changes take continuous effort over several years, not months of instruction"[30] and so effective strategies for formation must allow for the passing of time and the sharing of journeys. Growth, and for that matter decline, may remain hidden or imperceptible in the short term, and only recognizable with the benefit of reflection over months if not years. It is a human tendency to be in a rush where God is not, and one feature of an effective spiritual formation process is to cause the participants to slow down.

Growth also requires the application of disciplines and behaviors repeated over time until they become a part of the person's being. Such concerted effort requires support to maintain and a group presence over time is invaluable in this regard. Time also allows for accountability, knowing a promise or commitment will be checked. Creating a process which unfolds over time is challenging in an era of modular teaching and fast-tracked degrees, so a spiritual formation process for the seminary will need a unique structure from the rest of the program to be effective.

Forming Habits

The inescapable need for healthy habits of thinking and acting in order to nurture personal formation and sustain long-term ministry has long been central to spiritual formation initiatives. From the liturgies of the early church and the asceticism of the early monastic orders, through to the life rhythms of the Rule of Benedict, those seeking deeper

[30] Tyler, *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, 40.

spirituality and personal maturity have understood the vital role played by discipline and routine in "attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). Maas and O'Donnell observe that "a renewed commitment to more faithful observance . . . was almost always followed by new bursts of life."[31] Forming habits over time develops a "second nature" healthy response which, while perhaps seeming repetitive at the time, quietly reinforces growth and arrests decline in normal life, and becomes a life-giving resource in times of crisis.

Trainee's also need to identify, design and establish healthy habits to allow them to flourish in ministry after graduation. Examples of habits to support ministries after seminary that the formation strategy could help establish are participation in community, maintaining personal vulnerability and authenticity, active listening, spiritual nurture, self-care, and regular times of reflection and retreat.

These, then, are some pedagogical principles for spiritual formation arising from the theological foundation laid out in Chapter 3. The course outlined in the following section attempts to implement these principles into a program designed to be the center of the trainee's seminary experience. In summary, the course is firstly relational, structured around a community of trust which meets regularly and in which trust is intentionally built and protected. Formation is encouraged through modelling when both leader and participants are facilitated to share authentic journeys rather than rational studies or superficial encounters. The course will be intentionally holistic, integrating spirituality with the whole of life and dismantling the artificial boundaries often created between

[31] Maas and O'Donnell, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church*, 66.

body, mind and soul. It will honor the individual, recognizing God's universal call for his followers to become like Jesus, yet allowing them to grow at their own pace and level of effort just as he himself does.

Secondly, the course is extra-rational. It will also compensate for the limitations of cognition in spiritual formation by allowing group members to feel and be moved by the wonder of God, providing visceral experiences of his mysteries, his presence and his work in the lives of group members. It will involve relevant forms of liturgy, such as imagination and symbols, to help achieve this. These will lift the mind and heart from the analytical to the figurative to support extra rational growth. In so doing, it will allow participants to experience their need for growth at a heart level rather than just understand it at a cerebral level. It will anchor this in Scripture through meditative Bible reading, providing a heart literacy to match the growing biblical literacy being acquired in other parts of training.

Lastly, the course will be experiential, being built around creative learning environments which provide a heuristic rather than a cerebral learning context. It will utilize experiential learning processes to create self-awareness, and thus to stimulate urgency and self-motivation for change. It will allow extended time for the formation journey to both occur and to be perceived, recognizing that while people are often in a rush for spiritual formation, God is not. This time will allow participants to experience the value of slowing down to listen to God, to observe and reflect upon God's work, to pay attention to his voice and then to align their life accordingly. It will encourage and provide tools for the formation of habits conducive to ongoing spiritual formation after graduation to support sustainable, spiritually rich ministries.

Engaging a diverse group of people on a shared spiritual formation journey is a risk. Diverse backgrounds, beliefs, style, preferences and expectations all impact on a journey whose destination is sure but whose path is far from certain. Long into the voyage, group participants remain somewhat of a mystery to each other and even to themselves. This requires an effective pedagogy to structure the various formational experiences while maintaining flexibility for the uniqueness of each group. An effective pedagogy must take into account the particular people, content and environment involved. Each different formation group would become a unique but meaningful excursion on each participant's lifelong journey. This study has suggested some pillars to begin this worthwhile task. However, in the end this is a spiritual journey, and God's Spirit is the real leader of the formation process. Even with the best preparation and pedagogy, designing and leading a spiritual formation group, though very rewarding, will always remain something of a risk.

PART THREE

FORMATION STRATEGY AND CURRICULUM

CHAPTER 5

OVERVIEW OF THE FORMATION STRATEGY

It is clear from the significant challenges and assumptions inherent in seminary training outlined in Part One, and from the theology and resulting pedagogy in Part Two, that a personal formation strategy for ministry trainees needs to take a somewhat radical approach if it is to address these concerns adequately. Despite an obvious heart for formation in seminaries and the noble efforts at carving out a space in the seminary for formation to be supported, it seems that there is still plenty in the way the contemporary seminary learning model is structured that actually restricts, if not actively opposes, the very intent it sets out to achieve, which is the training of spiritual leaders for Christian communities. This chapter aims to outline one somewhat radical option for how a personal formation strategy might be more effective at seminary.

The SCD study in transformative learning referenced in Chapter 4 identified four specific hurdles in traditional seminary training which an effective formation process must overcome.[1] Firstly, the study found that seminary programs actually create a

[1] Les Ball, *Transforming Theology: Student Experience and Transformative Learning in Undergraduate Theological Education*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 5.

disconnect between theological studies and life experience. Subjects in the curriculum tended to be compartmentalized away from other subject fields and from life and ministry experience. They tended to be taught conceptually, with a focus on acquiring and demonstrating mastery of content rather than applying theological truths in daily living. Instead, an integrative process needs to be found where trainees are caused to consider and implement the implications of theological truths as they are learned.

Secondly, the survey found that an emphasis on foundationalism in introductory units imposed a heavy workload on students, especially in the early stages of their course. This prevented the establishment of healthy and sustainable habits for personal formation and risked those that were already established. Instead, time must be carved out for students to attend to personal formation as a guided part of their studies rather than additional to it. Thirdly, the study found that there were few deliberately structured transformative elements within the formal degree programs, with most seminaries relying on the relatively unstructured extra-curricular life of campuses or trainee ministry placements to provide this. Instead, seminaries need to adopt a proactive, intentional approach to formation rather than disbursing it to others or leaving it to chance.

Lastly, the study found that seminary curricula and delivery structures were not sufficiently trainee-centered to encourage transformation. Programs were focused on content and the achievement of generic criteria which did not necessarily allow for the inexact science of individual spiritual growth journeys and failed to effectively engage learners in the aspirational matters of the soul. Instead, the emphasis of seminary programs needs to balance the satisfactory completion of meeting minimum academic criteria with the enabling the personal formation in each individual journey.

In the search for a better approach to training Christian leaders, Jesus' model for equipping his disciples is formative. He did not lead from positions of authority within structures, or seek to convince others by his eloquence or impressive appearance, but by the message and authority of his shared life with others. He did not teach conceptually or remotely but used the everyday lives of those he met as teaching moments by awakening those around him to the spiritual significance of the moment. So his attendance at a friend's banquet becomes the opportunity to teach about humility by offering the best seat to others and to call people to enter the Kingdom of God (Luke 14:1-12). An anointing by a woman at a Pharisee's house becomes an opportunity to teach about forgiveness and expose religious self-righteousness (Luke 7:36-50). He ministered with his disciples side by side in everyday situations, touching people with profound insight and godly wisdom at their point of need. If Christian leaders today are to be adequately trained as Jesus set out to train his disciples, and to minister as Jesus did, that training must utilize and equip, not in a cloistered environment, but by interconnecting lives and life experiences with God's purposes. As David Augsburger concludes, "true spirituality is a spirituality of the road."[2]

This makes personal formation a central role of the seminary, yet one with a challenging pedagogy. The design of a formation strategy at seminary needs to resist as far as possible the classroom situations and cognitive methodology typically found there, and to emulate as far as possible the style of training Jesus used with his disciples, that is a kind of walking seminary, equipping people in a small group on the job, reflecting on

[2] Augsburger, *Dissident Discipleship*, 22.

and learning together from the experiences and events of life as they unfold. It needs to connect learning and living into an integrated development strategy unique to each person. Yet somehow it also must provide for the intentional growth specifically suited to the needs of ministry in the twenty-first century, while also meeting the timeframes, administration, assessment and accreditation demands of the tertiary sector. This presents great challenges for the seminary, but as Maas and O'Donnell observe, radical change is in order. Otherwise, they conclude, the persistent problem of pastors who know about God but do not experience him is "likely to continue (indefinitely) to plague the Church in general and theological education in particular, barring some radical changes in the way theology is taught and seminarians are prepared to serve as spiritual leaders."[3]

A Rationale for the Formation Design

To produce this radical change, the formation strategy that follows applies three design parameters, namely that formation must have a central function, it must have a process focus and it must have a relational form. Firstly, formation must have a central function, rather than an adjunct function, if it is to emulate Jesus' model and ensure ministry training addresses the whole person. Formation should become the hub of the training experience, integrating the learning from other parts of the curriculum with personal, spiritual and ministry leadership growth and thus serving to anchor the trainee's entire learning journey in personal transformation. It needs to combat the frequently compartmentalized studies in different curriculum streams by providing an integrative

[3] Maas & O'Donnell, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church.* 11.

space where implications in life and ministry can be perceived and practiced. It needs to provide an undergirding, space-creating and reflective experiential environment for trainees to process changes in their personal spiritual formation over time, creating a safe place to explore the Spirit's transformative work as they are prepared by him to be ministers of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the formation strategy outlined below is designed to be a fully accredited component in the curriculum, aiming to secure the time, resources and intentionality required to meet the challenges above and to counteract the tendency to both marginalize and trivialize formation during training. It will help trainees create the space in an otherwise busy ministry and study schedule to tend to spiritual growth within the demand hours of the course rather than being additional to them. It will challenge the current teaching and assessment methodologies to integrate learning with life in a more intentional way.

Secondly, formation must have a process focus rather than a content focus, causing a shift from knowledge to outcomes, with a strong formational thread running throughout. It will be essentially reflective and experiential, creating opportunities for extra-rational learning and self-discovery. It will focus on creative learning experiences where God's work in trainee's lives is noticed and heeded. This will challenge the predictability sought by accreditation and assessment procedures, as the syllabus will read more like a set of experiential discoveries than an index of topics to be learned.

Thirdly, formation must have a relational form rather than an informational form. The formation process at seminary must be long-term, and essentially person-centered and holistic rather than didactic and cognitive. It will rely on significant trust

relationships which share for a time a whole-of-life journey with others, providing guidance, reflection and challenge along that journey. This occurs only over time where the levels of authenticity required for such shared journeys can be achieved. This will challenge, and inevitably cause the formational components of training, to stand outside the usual time-bound, content-driven, professor-led constraints of most contemporary teaching, especially those of modular and online forms.

The resulting recommended strategy is known as *Personal Formation* (hereafter, PF). It is named this way to capture the broader mandate of spiritual formation as outlined in Chapter 3 beyond what is often termed spirituality. It reinforces the notion that the training, practices and exercises experienced during ministry training all have the intent of creating a context where the love and grace of God initiates, motivates and enables the personhood of Christ holistically in his followers. This is done so that they may, in some imperfect way, establish for themselves and be able to model and lead the church into a life that matches the richness of God's calling.

The Personal Formation strategy has three distinguishing features which aim to meet the challenges outlined above. These features are an ecosystem of relationships, three compounding phases of formation and three dimensions of formation. These features will now be explained, while the next chapter provides the structure and resources for how these can be implemented and supported.

An Ecosystem of Relationships

Given the relational and experiential pedagogies for personal spiritual formation, and the need to apply learnings in real-life ministry contexts, an ecosystem of

relationships will be required to support the trainee. The main relationships are group-based and organized by the seminary. Additional relationships are ministry context based and organized by the trainee. All relationships are trained and supervised by a seminary faculty member and feedback is collated from all sources.

Rather than a classroom or lecture situation, the course is centered on the *formation group* which is the main relational ecosystem and is designed and managed as a community of trust. Each formation group consists of a group of students who live and minister near to each other and who commit to meet for one year to learn and grow together, using the gifts God provides in the group to support and guide the group journey. The group meets monthly and is led by the *formation director*. The formation director is a paid adjunct role, trained, supervised and accountable to a faculty member in charge of personal spiritual formation. Formation directors will be drawn from the local area where formation groups are formed, limiting the travel requirements for both trainees and director. Potential candidates for formation directors are ministers or ex-ministers, Christian counselors and para-church workers. Training in spiritual direction or spirituality is desirable, but the resources, training and supervision provided as part of the course will also suffice. The more valuable credential is personal spiritual maturity in the broad sense as used in this project and a heart for personal formation in themselves and the trainees in their group to be prepared for ministry.

This is supported by the *mentor*, who provides individual supports for the trainee's group experience and general formation. The mentor is a volunteer, known and chosen by the trainee, who meets monthly with the trainee through the academic year. The mentor provides an individual context for trainees to reflect upon their experience of

their formation group, ministry experience and academic studies, and to support the trainee's contribution to formation group. It provides for deeper confidentiality and allows the individualized time to focus on more specific growth strategies.

The third member of the relational ecosystem is the ministry *coach*, whose primary task is to integrate learning with practice. The coach is usually a staff member at the trainee's chosen ministry context, and is known and chosen by the trainee. The coach gives on-the-ground support and guidance for certain demand hours from each subject that are allocated to an assessable task designed by the lecturer but delivered at the ministry context. Coaching hours are thus linked to a trainee's subject load, and are part of, rather than additional to, that workload. Trainees with a full-time workload would meet monthly with their coach.

This ecosystem is overseen by the formation director, who facilitates the formation group and supervises the mentors and coaches of the trainees in the group. The ecosystem works as a team of three for each individual trainee. Early in the academic year, the formation director meets each trainee's mentor and coach in the team of three to align their understanding and approach, and coordinate their efforts in supporting the trainee's formation through the year. At the end of the year, feedback is collated from all three strands of the ecosystem to provide trainees with a snapshot of their formational development and goals going forward. The structures to achieve this will be outlined in the next chapter.

Three Compounding Phases of Formation

The strategy is allocated into three phases of one-year duration, each of which forms one accredited subject in the trainee's program. This provides the long-term, relational basis for the program outlined above, and provides the context for the extra-rational and experiential pedagogies required. It allows time for the formation of the key relationships of trust previously mentioned and for growth to be observed and celebrated over extended time together. As trainees move through the phases, they apply spiritual formation principles at increasing levels of depth in keeping with an assumed increasing level of professional responsibility. This encourages trainees to sync their deepening leadership roles in ministry with a growing depth of spiritual maturity and the habits to match. This is reinforced over the phases with a growing contribution to the leadership of the formation group as well.

The three phases progressively shift the emphasis from a focus on the self through a focus on the self in relationship with others to a focus on formation for the self in leadership. Thus trainees cycle over the same formational principles each year, while applying them to different spheres of learning and implementation in ministry. This provides for a compounding encounter with the various dimensions of spiritual formation to match the growing scope and responsibility that trainees experience throughout their course.

As each phase is an accredited subject in its own right, the time commitment for formation is included in, rather than additional to, the trainee's workload. This creates the time, space and dedication to attend properly to formation. It brings deliberately structured transformative elements into the formal degree program, and in a way which is

trainee-centered and trainee-driven. It provides an integrative process where trainees are caused to consider and implement the implications of theological truths as they are learned. Each of the three compounding phases and their learning goals is explained in turn below.

PF1 – The Personhood of the Minister

The first phase, called *Personal Formation 1*, (hereafter, PF1) is focused on developing and equipping the personhood of the minister. It aims to help trainees grasp God's intention for them so that their lives come to match the splendor and richness of his love and grace as shown in salvation and modelled by Jesus. It aims to allow God's Spirit to reveal their imperfectly formed personhood and inadequate outlooks and attitudes which threaten to besiege their ministries if left unaddressed. It allows God to reveal their needs and begin the journey to wholeness and Christlike character from which they can begin to emulate Christ's ministry. It helps develop the skills of reflection and listening to God, so that they might see themselves and their ministries through God's eyes rather than their own. It establishes habits of being authentically themselves in the presence of others which creates the possibility of community essential for the spiritual journey.

This is achieved in PF1 by creating a covenanted community of trust through storytelling, and introducing practices which promote self-awareness. It explores the impact in ministry of culture and of personal issues in the trainee's life and history. It establishes habits of connecting well with others and learning from others with different experiences of life and ministry. This phase identifies a healthy personhood as a basis for effective ministry and helps trainees establish a self-care strategy and broader ministry

philosophy to support and maintain this health. It enables trainees to discover their personal spirituality, and helps them develop skills and habits in maintaining intimacy with God.

By the end of phase 1, trainees should sense the answers to Paul's prayer that "the God of peace…equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him" (Hebrews 13:21). They should have a deeper knowledge of God and a deep knowledge of what it means to walk in harmony with God's character. They should have a deeper self-awareness and an increasingly healthy approach to themselves, to others and to ministry. They should have established basic practices of intimacy with God and have a growing idea of their unique ministry philosophy grounded in who they are and how God has equipped them so far. In short, phase 1 should allow trainees to experience a significant step from being worldly beings coached by culture, life experiences, personal hurts and unmet needs towards renewal into the spiritual beings that God created them to be.

PF2 – The Personhood of the Minister in Relationship

The second phase, called *Personal Formation 2* (hereafter, PF2) builds on the personal awareness and skills of PF1 and applies them to the interpersonal sphere. It helps students become aware of their relational style and habits and of impact of their behavior on others. It shows how the actions of unformed people can threaten intimacy and community because "hurt people hurt people."[4] It shows how God's love and grace give

[4] Frost, *Experiencing Father's Embrace,* 105.

the possibility of a new kind of relating for believers, one not based on natural tendencies of hiding, performance, retaliation, and control, but based on God's character of love and grace. PF2 also elucidates the value of participating in trust relationships and corporate spirituality and highlights the challenges to health in such group environments. It provides a framework for understanding power, trust and ethical issues in ministry to establish healthy church congregations.

This is achieved by targeted experiences and reflective exercises together with taking a growing leadership role in the formation community. The trainee's key relationships are explored and understood as the groundwork for healthy relationships in general, based on the biblical principle that "we love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Exercises and guided personal retreats focus on how the love and grace of God enable the acceptance of others even though they are imperfect, and discusses how this truth informs the trainee's ministry practice. In summary, the foundation of self-acceptance through the love of God begun in PF1 is now applied to the trainee's ministries and relationships, in the knowledge that the way trainees treat others is profoundly steered by how trainees feel about themselves.

By the end of PF2, trainees will have identified their emotional and relational needs and have implemented a plan for healing and ongoing personal physical, relational emotional and spiritual health as needed. They will have a strong grasp of the relational dimension of spirituality and how true spirituality shows in the way people treat others. They will have articulated a personal ministry philosophy which includes their goals, personality and abilities, and they will be consistently using the learning from their subjects to inform their ministry practices.

PF3 – The Personhood of the Minister as a Leader

The third phase, called *Personal Formation 3* (hereafter, PF3) builds on the learning of PF 1 & 2 and applies them to the trainee as a leader. It helps trainees identify, evaluate and develop their leadership style and God-given abilities to articulate a professional development plan for them in ministry and to map a direction for their ministry future. It encourages the acquisition of skills and sensitivity in leading others into spiritual vitality and renewal, and shows how to build authentic communities of trust. It deepens the trainee's reliance on God as a sustaining resource along with the development of an ongoing support group to sustain ministry and personal formation into the future.

This is achieved by assuming guided leadership roles within the formation group and learning how to build trust and lead other formation communities. Exercises and resources will revolve around the leader's inner journey and instituting a self-care strategy for both personal and spiritual needs. A guided twenty-four-hour silent retreat helps trainees identify growth needs and listen to God regarding their ministry future.

By the end of PF3, each trainee should have an implemented self-care strategy and a commitment to an ongoing support group for their formation. They should have a defined ministry philosophy which includes personal spiritual formation for themselves and others in their care. Their ministry philosophy will be influenced deeply by the subjects they have studied, and they will be aware of professional development needs and opportunities to achieve their goals. They will have a resources toolbox to help equip others in spiritual formation.

These three phases, then, aim to provide a thorough formational preparation for Christian leadership from a starting point which assumes nothing. However, this approach also gathers together trainees from different phases into the same formation group, which has several additional benefits. It caters to the practicalities of providing formation groups in various locations by allowing students in all phases to belong to the same formation group. It also facilitates people of different levels of formation to share and inform each other's journeys and enrich the groups. It also has the effect of reinforcing formation as the center of the student's training experience as other learning experiences become more transitory in increasingly decentralized seminary training models. It also provides supervised contexts for students to lead formation as a central function of the ministry role. Thus the formation groups become central support structures, formational contexts and training opportunities for trainees in personal spiritual formation.

The Dimensions of Personal Formation

To ensure the breadth of formation is included in the process and to resist the frequently narrow definition of spirituality, formation is described in three different dimensions which all run parallel in the trainee's formation journey. The boundaries between these dimensions are in fact a little vague and somewhat artificial, and the dimensions are in reality essentially interlinked elements within spiritual formation. However, the distinction serves an important purpose in clarifying the breadth of formational concerns and in ensuring equal emphasis is given to each of them. Themes for formation group processes and resources will be drawn more or less equally from the three areas.

The first dimension is called, for wont of a better term, *spiritual formation*. This focuses on the development of a deeper intimacy and awareness of God. While this choice of name runs the risk of reinforcing a narrow definition of spiritual formation, with explanation it seems the best term to use given the lack of suitable alternatives. It serves to remind trainees that such intimacy with God is central to effective functioning in ministry, and establishes habits to preserve this intimacy in the midst of a busy ministry life.

Exercises and resources in this component will focus on the skills of developing intimacy with God drawn from many Christian traditions, both contemporary and historical. It will range from disciplines in Protestant churches such as Bible reading and prayer to disciplines preserved better in Catholic and Orthodox traditions such as meditation, lectio divina, contemplation and iconography. The exercises and resources used will also acknowledge different personal preferences in spirituality and provide different options for developing intimacy and listening to God as well as extending existing mindsets using Richard Foster's seven streams of Christian devotion as the framework.[5]

The second dimension of personal formation is called *character formation* and focuses on developing in each trainee what may be summarized as a settled personhood as a man or woman of God. Again the choice of the term character is made for expediency and clarity, but the component also seeks to go deeper than what is often

[5] The seminal works here are Richard J. Foster, *Longing for God: Seven Paths of Christian Devotion,* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009) and *Streams of Living Water,* (London: Harper Collins, 1998).

thought of as character in terms such as ethics, responsibility or even maturity and to focus on what the essential nature of who each trainee is at a deep level and to bring this to God for sanctification, healing and wholeness. It addresses the findings of Robin Maas and Gabriel O'Donnell that "Our seminaries are increasingly populated with people who come not knowing who they are, because they do not know where they come from"[6] and seeks to provide an incubator for deeper self-discovery and healing for trainee's into their God-given identity that they might each "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13b).

In this regard, the term *personhood* is used to depict the deeper sense of what makes a person whole beyond merely functional, execution or performance factors. The intention is to consider matters in the emotional, relational, attitudinal and ethical spheres that may not limit life in a physical sense but nonetheless affect the outcome and wholeness of a person's life. It seeks to capture the essentially life-oriented outcomes of true spirituality as defined by Jesus and outlined previously in chapter three on theological foundations. It ensures the spirituality of seminaries includes not just a strong relationship with God but a strong identity for each trainee on who they are in God and how this plays out in relationship with others.

The term *settledness* is used to describe a deep awareness and acceptance within each trainee of their God-given identity in the unique form it finds itself in each individual. It includes an absence of striving to be or become someone other than the person genuinely is, while allowing the Holy Spirit to sanctify and grow to maturity the

[6] Maas and O'Donnell, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church*, 12.

person that they are. The need for settledness extends to the network of relationships and roles in each trainee's life as well, and is based on the understanding that ministry is not separate from, but deeply interconnected with the ministers' life in its entirety. Thus rather than an ethical study, the character formation component is a journey into allowing God to both inform and transform into wholeness a trainee's true identity as defined and enabled by God.

The third dimension of personal formation is called *ministry formation*, which includes helping each trainee develop an informed approach to their unique ministry calling and style given his or her God-given personality, giftedness and life experiences. Its focus is on guiding each trainee to define and appraise a personal ministry philosophy which is true to their unique identity in God as it unfolds in the character formation processes and true to the calling of ministry calling itself. This includes establishing habits for ministry sustainability and goals for ministry direction and approach which are based upon and suited to individual trainee personality, style and key relationships.

Although somewhat arbitrary, using these dimensions will remind the trainee and their ecology of relationships in the program of the breadth of the formation enterprise and help avoid undue emphasis on one or other dimension which might suit a particular person, seminary or denominational context. It prevents formation becoming a mystical journey alone and ensures practical considerations of ministry practice are informed by the spiritual. It provides a context to integrate the personal, spiritual, relational, emotional and philosophical dimensions of ministry to help meet the cry for stronger formational outcomes during training.

The strategy outlined above aims to ensure that for at least three years during training, each trainee experiences a guided spiritual formation process which functions as the hub of their experience at seminary and synthesizes their learning in a holistic way. It models and equips people for formation, deepens intimacy with God and creates awareness of the various formational factors which drive needs and behavior, both good and bad. It integrates learning with practice so that the curriculum as a whole is given a formational impetus. It promotes emotional and relational health for ministers to lead healthy churches with healthy ministries. It helps each person establish a considered ministry philosophy which reflects their unique spiritual, relational, temperamental circumstances as well as clarity around their calling from God. In so doing, it aims to address the hurdles to formation so problematic in seminaries today. The next chapter outlines the operational structures that facilitate this strategy.

CHAPTER 6

STRUCTURE OF THE FORMATION STRATEGY

The overall formation strategy of three subjects in personal formation, is designed to unfold in three phases over three discreet years during the course of an accredited ministry training program. In the Australian context, this is typically a four-year undergraduate program, with a fast track option of three years and a maximum of nine years. These three phases do not necessarily occur in consecutive years but are flexible to meet the trainee's schedule and ministry context. Trainees may choose those years best suited for them to engage in focused formational processes, taking into account their personal and ministry commitments, subject load and the current work of the Spirit in their life. The following chapter explains the structure and curriculum of the formation strategy and explains how the key roles will be managed and resourced. It explains in depth the process of formation group, which is the central element in the strategy. It also provides the details for the accreditation, assessment and organizational of such a course in a seminary.

Yearly Structure

As previously outlined, the personal formation subjects have a duration of one academic year. This puts them at odds with most contemporary ministry training which is no longer residential, but rather modular or online. Therefore, trainees are not required to meet weekly at the seminary, which would place undue travel and time requirements on them. In ACOM's case, it also runs counter to the basic training philosophy of training people as much as possible in the context of a ministry situation rather than at an educational institution. Instead, the yearly schedule is designed around several relational meetings of extended blocks of time, with the longest blocks being the most centralized and the shortest blocks being the least. The yearly structure may be divided into three sections.

The Regional Retreat

The academic year begins with longest and most centralized time block, being the regional retreat. All students in any of the three Personal Formation subjects will attend this three-day retreat, where the formation groups will be birthed. The retreat is organized regionally so that trainees only travel within their own state to attend. As well as kicking off the formation and academic year, the retreat also efficiently serves many other needs. It allows faculty and trainees from all groups to meet each other, building a broader community with others whom they will meet in subjects through the year. Having gathered the students from their busy ministry and training situations where they are usually fully occupied with needs of the church and its mission, there is also the need to provide them with heart space and mind space to bond with each other in the formation

group and with their formation director. It also establishes the groups on the right footing, by allowing the time and focus to create trust, to hear God, and to begin their formation journey together.

Regional retreat will include an orientation to the year, an introduction to spirituality and formation, regional connecting and cohort building events, worship and most importantly, formation group times. These group times will focus on the process of telling life stories as the most effective and efficient way to build a community of trust. Formation directors are trained to lead this process so it is well-managed, including appropriate responses from each member to build acceptance and authenticity. This is designed to create an environment where authenticity is emboldened and transformation can occur. It is a brief replication of monastic life, which is especially useful for those students who have poorly developed communities at their place of ministry. The retreat context provides the allotment of uninterrupted time needed for a life story to be told by each participant, allowing the formation curriculum to begin at the very first group meeting on return. A sample Regional retreat schedule is provided at appendix 2.

Monthly Formation Meetings

The bulk of the year is spent in smaller, decentralized meetings with the formation group, mentor and coach. Formation groups consist of up to eight trainees who meet at locations close to where they live and minister. Groups are formed at the regional retreat and are closed to new members after the retreat, as the addition of another person requires the process to begin over again to bring everyone into the group. This can be

organizationally challenging for seminaries with late enrollments and limited resources, but is nonetheless an essential boundary to protect group life and formational power.

Formation groups meet for seven half-day meetings through the year, making one meeting per month. They have a life of one year, after which they will be brought to a close and the unique obligations of the formation director and group members towards one another will come to an end. Even if groups have the same members in a following year, this will be treated as an entirely new group. This prevents groups becoming exclusive over time, from inadvertently shifting focus to pastoral support or from becoming stale.

Individual trainees also meet with their mentor and coach for individualized personal, spiritual and ministry formation and the integration of learning with ministry practice. Trainees choose their own mentor and coach, usually at their ministry placement. They meet with their mentor eight times through the year for two hours, and with their coach for two hours per subject in which they are enrolled for the year. The Mentor and Coach roles are explained in more detail in the roles section below.

Closure

Toward the end of the year, each person in the ecosystem of relationships implements a proactive closure process. After such a rich experience of community where personal journeys have been shared and risked, good closure is vital for allowing the groups and relationships to end well, and for all participants to move on to new relationships and new ways of relating. As part of closure, feedback is provided both

ways, and information on trainee engagement is collated to contribute to their subject grade. Both closure and assessment are detailed in separate sections below.

The Formation Group

Formation groups are the foundation of the strategy. Groups are led by the formation director and are formed through the storytelling process at the regional retreat to become formational communities of trust. This trust is reinforced and protected by a clear group covenant which incorporates robust confidentiality, and by the formation director modelling vulnerability and authenticity to encourage it in others. The formation group environment facilitates the personal, relational and spiritual health of trainees, including building lives of integrity and authenticity to prepare for long-term healthy ministries. It also teaches and practices disciplines of spiritual growth such as prayer and contemplation.

Formation groups have four primary roles in the overall structure. Firstly, they are the main formational process of the course and the primary context for delivering and processing the course content. They use various action-reflection and kinesthetic resources provided to introduce key formational concepts and strategies and provide the opportunity to practice them. They enable formation through ministry to one another using the openings that God provides in the lives and ministries of group members.

The second role is to establish healthy habits of community and accountability. An effective formation group models and helps trainees appreciate such contexts in their ongoing ministry as key support and spiritual fitness mechanisms in ministry where time pressures and the unique pressures of the role easily lead ministers to detach themselves

from authentic relationships in a congregation. Trainees also learn how to establish and lead such communities through the increasing leadership roles they assume in the group as they progress through the course.

The third role is to orient, coordinate and supervise the trainees' mentor and coach. The formation director uses the trainee's contribution to the group to guide an awareness of their formational needs and strategies. The director then coordinates the efforts of the mentor and coach to help them work together in the same direction.

The fourth role is to build a sense of belonging and pastoral support for each student in the group. In ACOM's decentralized, modular training model, this is no longer provided by a residential campus, and ministry contexts vary widely in levels of pastoral support provided. Hence the formation group fills a vital role as a college community of fellow trainees bound by many shared experiences in both study and ministry.

The Formation Group Curriculum

The content will allocate roughly equal time to the three dimensions of formation outlined in the previous chapter namely, spiritual formation, character formation and ministry formation. At each of the seven meetings, the group will focus on one of these dimensions using a schedule of content topics provided. For each content topic, a toolbox of targeted reflections is provided to guide and inform the session.

In the spiritual formation dimension, the headings are counter-culture, spiritual disciplines and meditative Bible reading. Counter-culture resources focus on understanding the impact of popular culture on lifestyle and making choices about formational influences. The spiritual disciplines resources teach and practice the range of

spiritual traditions and prayer from the rich tradition of Christian contemplative spirituality, and introduces Richard Foster's Renovaré model[1] to position contemplative spirituality in the constellation of spiritual practices.

In the character formation dimension, the headings are relational health and holistic spirituality. Relational health resources focus on building and sustaining healthy key relationships and understanding individual relational needs. It identifies the impact of past relationships and how this might impact relationships in future. It helps trainees establish settled relationships and establish healthy boundaries with others. Holistic spirituality resources focus on building emotional health based on the love and grace of God and builds essential character qualities for effective ministry such as assertiveness, handling criticism positively, managing anger and the expectations of others.

In the ministry formation dimension, the headings are self-care and ministry calling. Self-care resources help trainees develop habits and strategies for sustainable ministry, for nurturing life and relationships beyond ministry and avoiding burnout. The various ministry calling resources guide trainees in their vocational development through a better understanding of who God has made them to be. It helps to clarify their ministry calling and to understand and articulate their ministry philosophies based on their God-given gifts, passions and life experiences.

At each meeting, groups and formation directors will select the most appropriate resources under the allocated heading according to individual needs, group needs, experiences and trainee level. These resources are then used between meetings for

[1] Richard J. Foster, *Streams of Living Water* (London: Harper Collins, 1998).

individual reflection. Trainees write a one-page reflection describing the impact of the resource on them. This is submitted to the formation director but they are only asked to share with the group as far as they feel comfortable to do so.

The Formation Group Schedule

The meeting schedule is flexible to be adjusted by the formation director and group as they see fit, but generally includes five parts. A schedule with timings is provided in Appendix C. Part one is reconnecting, which guides the group to bond again since the last meeting and to reinforce the covenant of trust and confidentiality. It includes prayer to invite God's spirit to lead the meeting. Part two is the Bible insight, which is built around the practice of meditative Bible Study and prayer, and assists with the integration of theory and practice in the trainee's development. The insight is led by a trainee as a personal reflection on how God is leading them through a particular Bible passage. The passage may be drawn from the trainee's own time alone with God, from their academic studies or from a recent ministry experience. The intention is not to deliver a bible study or discuss the theology of the passage, but to share a personal interaction with the passage as led by the Spirit, and how this has prompted them to grow or change. A training resource for trainees to present a Bible insight is provided at Appendix D. The insight is closed with contemplative prayer, where each group member considers the impact of the insight on their own life and listens for guidance from God.

Part three is the resource reflection which provides the content of the course using an action-reflection methodology, and is the main focus of each group meeting. These resources are provided in a toolbox for formation directors, but this may be added to by

the formation director or by trainees from PF3. Sample resources from each dimension of formation are provided in Appendix E. The resource supports the formation director to be adequately prepared by providing background information and readings. It also provides an introduction to the topic for trainees and provides avenues and options to explore a certain theme further if interested. It includes the resource itself in an action-reflection format to facilitate self-reflection and authenticity in sharing with the group.

Each meeting through the year is allocated a formation theme as shown on the schedule at Appendix C. These themes are drawn equally from the three dimensions of formation outlined in Chapter 5. The director and trainees together choose a resource from the range allocated to theme of the next meeting, then trainees use this for reflection between meetings. Trainees then share their reflections on the impact of the resource on their personhood in group discussion. The discussion answers any questions arising and clarifies the intent of the resource, and helps individuals define actions to take for growth.

Part four is a workshopping session, led by the formation director who involves the ministry of all group members to one another. The content for the workshop may be drawn several sources. Formational issues may arise in the lives of group members, either between or during group meetings. Issues may also arise from the resource used for reflection between meetings. If nothing arises from these, formation directors will use one of the other resources in the toolbox for a reflection. Formation directors will be trained in workshopping techniques and the resource used in this training is provided in Appendix F However, the raw material of a good workshop is a creative space facilitated by a formation director who is aware of the Holy Spirit and sensitive of others. It usually involves a kinesthetic process to allow room for God to be heard and to move, and to

enable self-discovery for the trainee. This is followed naturally by part five, which is prayer. This should flow from the experiences of the meeting and focus on those most impacted or in need.

The Closure Process

The final meeting with the formation group and the mentor will be dedicated to the closure process, with a unique event designed to mark the occasion and leave clear memories of the end. The following keys will be used for training and planning the closure meeting. These are provided in Appendix G as a resource for formation directors and mentors to lead the process.

Step one in good closure is good preparation. The group should be started with the end in mind, so the last meeting date is clearly known and listed on the group covenant. Several reminders should come through the year in which month closure will come. Expectations should be set regularly at meetings, emphasize how many more meetings to go in the last 2 or 3 meetings. This preparation will help members successfully prepare for closure when it comes.

Step two is to create a tangible and memorable event. To achieve this, the group needs to something out of the ordinary. This could be a unique and memorable meeting place or a memorable process. An appeal to the senses will help make the experience memorable. This creates an emotional milestone to mark the transition out of the group.

Step three is to explain clearly that that the relationships in the group will change after closure. Friendships and shared experiences will remain the same, but members will relate to each other in different ways without the covenant of confidentiality. This allows

members to move on from the group and avoid unrealistic expectations that support levels and availability will remain the same as in the group as this may not be logistically possible for many. This is of particular importance for the formation director who must articulate clearly what the new relationship will be. Availability and boundaries after closure need to be clearly explained.

Step four is to invite feedback. Both the people and processes employed in formation need to grow and flex over time as more is learned. Feedback should be sought about the formation group and the process as a whole. Confidential individual feedback should be provided about the mentor and coach. The formation director needs to provide this feedback to the mentor and coach after the process has finished for the year to allow them the opportunity for growth and change.

Step five is to allow for grief and celebration. If the formation group has been effective, there may be strong feelings of grief and sadness at leaving the valued group behind. The depth of feeling may catch some individuals by surprise. These feelings need to be respected and acknowledged if the person is to move on without the group. The group should also reflect on and celebrate what has been achieved and enjoyed as a group, and how various individuals have grown.

Roles and Resourcing

It is clear from this structural outline that the formation director plays a central role in its success, and this role needs to be well guided, resourced and supported. The mentor and coach play lesser roles, but also need guiding and resourcing. This section explains a method for training, supervising and resourcing these roles to guard the quality

of the trainee's experience and for the roles to function effectually as a team of three in each trainee's development.

The Formation Director

Formation groups will be led by a locally-based formation director specially chosen and trained for his or her ability to facilitate the learning processes and use of the tools in the course. The person of the formation director is critical to the success of the group because, as Parker J. Palmer observes, "The right model of creating a community of truth emerges from the identity and integrity of the teacher."[2] The formations director's way of being present is critical for modeling and creating an effective group because a teacher "projects the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject and our way of being together."[3]

In this regard, the ways in which Jesus facilitated spiritual formation in his disciples is once again a helpful guide. Despite coming from a culture much removed from our own, his approach provides many useful strategies for leading spiritual formation today. Firstly, he called people personally (Mark 3:13) showing a knowledge and belief in each individual that he worked with. Secondly he called them into his presence to share his life (Mark 3:14). He did not assume a different personality when in role but was authentically himself with the disciples as in the rest of life. Thirdly, this shared life allowed him to model how to minister (John 13:12-14) so the disciples were shown a living example of the spiritual principles they often discussed. Fourthly, he

[2] Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, 136.

[3] Ibid., 2.

nourished the same authentic living and relating amongst his disciples as well in a shared community (Luke 6:12-16) and fifthly, he built habits which encouraged their community life to continue after he was gone (John 17:21-22).

However, while the person of the formation director is pivotal, the group life is not to be centered on the director but on the trainees. A formation director must resist the temptation to make his or her own knowledge or experience the focal point, and instead allow the experiences of trainees in life, in ministry and with God to both provide the content and facilitate learning using the spiritual giftedness in the group. As Parker Palmer summarizes, directors need to "spend less time filling the space with data and my own thoughts and more time opening a space where students can have a conversation with the subject."[4] However, they must guide this to still ensure effective outcomes on the range of topics within the curriculum. This makes the director's role more fluid and more difficult than most faculty roles, having primarily a group process responsibility rather than a content provider role.

Therefore, an adequate process of training and supervision needs to be put in place for formation directors. This strategy provides an orientation process for formation directors at the start of the year, which includes some training and resourcing. An orientation schedule is provided are Appendix H and training resources on facilitating the telling of life stories and workshopping techniques may be found in Appendices F and J. This is reinforced by a supervision session mid-year which also guides feedback and assessment processes. This timing helps ensure due academic diligence is provided and

[4] Palmer, *The Courage to Teach,* 120

appropriate standards are upheld. Schedules for formation director orientation and supervision are provided in Appendix K.

The Mentor

Trainees also select a mentor near to where they live or minister to help process at a one-to-one level the content of the formation group and experiences in ministry. Qualities for mentors are the same for those of formation directors, but the choice is left to the trainee to ensure a healthy relational base for good mentoring to occur. Through the deeper confidentiality of a one-to-one setting, it is envisaged that mentoring allows students to risk greater vulnerability and therefore take longer strides in formation while the group and formation director anchor the direction of that formation in both the combined God-given wisdom of the group and in the curriculum. Mentors are trained and supervised on the same schedule as formation directors but with different resources.

The Coach

Trainees also select a coach in their ministry context to guide them in their ministry and with their subject integration. Coaches are selected for their availability and ministry experience and maturity. Each lecturer sets an integration task as part of the assessable work of the subject to be delivered in a ministry context. The coach helps the trainee find the best context, helps with preparation and debriefs the learning to ensure theory guides practice and vice versa. Information is communicated between the lecturer and coach using the one-page *ministry action contact* as part of the subject requirements, which also allows the coach to feedback that the work has been satisfactorily completed.

Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation of a personal spiritual formation journey is notoriously difficult, and this may be tacitly implied in the general reticence of seminaries to incorporate formation as an accredited part of the program. A key challenge is that accreditation requirements are frequently couched in cognitive terms and always, by definition, couched in measurable terms. This raises the very real problem of exactly what to measure in assessing spiritual formation, and then how to phrase this in assessment documentation and tasks.

The danger of assessment is that it risks trainees relapsing into the purely cognitive domain, where they report on what they know about formation rather than how they have been formed. In contrast, formation tends to produce affective, frequently slow and sometimes hidden results, yielding behavioral, attitudinal and volitional changes that are generally hard to assess. Formation is also a never-ending process "until Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19) and until it "present(s) everyone perfect in Christ" (Colossians 1:29). Thus in a very real way, no trainee can ever receive top marks. Robert Lightner wrote of three caveats to bear in mind when assessing the fruit of formation. Firstly, believers are not always fruitful, but this does not necessarily indicate failure of the process. Secondly, the fruit may be very real but hidden from view and thirdly, the fruit may be different from what was expected.[5] These are very real problems for assessing formation, which is nevertheless a necessary task if the personal formation subjects are to be accredited as an integral part of the curriculum.

[5] R. P. Lightner, "Salvation and Spiritual Formation" in Kenneth O. Gangel and James Wilhoit, *The Christian Educators' Handbook on Spiritual Formation* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1994), 44.

Therefore, assessment in this formation strategy will focus less on trying to gauge spiritual maturity and more on observations drawn from a broad base about the trainee's engagement with the group and with the formation process. Healthy formational behaviors will be assessed such as transparency, self-awareness and reflective ability, and the utilization of support, accountability and self-care mechanisms. It will seek to evaluate 'teach-ability' and the depth with which trainees grapple with growth issues. A *Grading Guide* is provided at Appendix L to help moderate grading levels and use a similar list of qualities for assessment across different groups and directors. Assessment will be spread over a number of reflective tasks to minimize anomalies and maximize opportunities to assess engagement and effort. These reflective tasks will be submitted in a variety of written and presented exercises in order to meet the record-keeping obligations of accreditation. A list of assessment tasks is provided at Appendix M.

Evaluation will be invited from all students at the end of each year against the stated course outcomes to create a self-assessment of progress in personal spiritual formation and helpful feedback for the directors and course director. As the real impact may only be recognizable over the long term, all graduates of the program will be surveyed every 5 years on the usefulness of the course in laying a solid foundation for healthy ministries.

Accreditation

The demands of accreditation require outcomes to be articulated for each subject in the areas of knowledge, skills and values, the supervision of suitably qualified faculty and the appropriate allocation of demand hours. Multiple subjects in the same content

area also need to show differentiation of content and advancement in knowledge, skills and values from lower to higher levels as trainees progress through them. In the case of the three PF subjects, these demands are met in the following ways. Full accreditation documentation is provided in Appendix A.

Course Outcomes

For the purposes of accreditation, PF1 is subtitled *The Personhood of the Minister* and is described as promoting self-awareness and exploring the impact of personal issues from the student's life and history on their functioning in ministry. It identifies personal health as a basis for effective ministry and helps trainees establish a self-care strategy and a basic ministry philosophy. It enables the trainee to discover their personal spirituality, and begins them on their journey of contemplative spirituality to enrich their inner loves for sustainable ministry. Specific outcomes for PF1 are to know the basic principles of personal spiritual health and to grasp the structure of an effective personal formation strategy. Trainees should also understand the formational power of culture, and assess the influence of culture on their lifestyle and values. They should be able to engage with the Bible reflectively and devotionally, and to articulate a personal philosophy of ministry as a function of their unique God-given passion and giftedness. By the end of the course they should value healthy relationships and accountability, and value being authentic in the presence of others and of God as a foundation for emotional and spiritual health.

PF2 is subtitled *The Personhood of the Minister in Relationship with Others* and is described as building on the personal awareness and skills acquired in PF1 and applying them to the interpersonal sphere. This subject helps trainees become aware of their

relational style, habits and needs, and to value and participate in trust relationships and corporate spirituality. It provides a framework for understanding power, trust and ethical issues in ministry, and helps trainees articulate a personal ministry philosophy. Specific outcomes for PF2 are to understand the basis for healthy relationships, including issues of power and trust, to recognize when relationships are unhealthy, and to design and utilize extended time alone with God effectively. Trainees should be self-aware in relationship, be able to form and maintain trust relationships, be cognizant of how personal behavior of people in ministry impacts others and be able to apply this awareness in their own ministry experience. They should value Jesus' model of relational ministry, and value maintaining heathy relationships with God, self and others as a foundation for healthy ministry and a healthy church. They should value time alone with God and hearing God speak through Scripture as a basic formation philosophy.

PF3 is subtitled *The Personhood of the Minister as a Leader* and is described as building on the learning of PF1&2 and applying it to the trainee as a spiritual leader. It helps trainees identify, evaluate and develop their leadership style and to articulate a personal development plan for ongoing health and ongoing personal and professional growth. It provides skills in leading others into spiritual vitality, and helps students map a direction for their ministry future. It supports the implementation of strategies for healthy, sustainable, long-term ministry. Specific outcomes for PF3 are to understand the principles of leading an effective personal formation process and to establish and lead a formational community of trust and accountability which is gracious and life-giving. Trainees should be able to design and manage a twenty-four-hour personal retreat as an effective spiritual formation strategy, and to value dependence on God as a Christian

leadership principle and coping style. Trainees should value interconnectedness with others in leadership and to respect the spiritual journey of others as both unique and instructive.

Demand Hours

The schedule shown at Appendix N shows the allocation of demand hours as required for submission for accreditation as a tertiary level subject in Australia. The total required hours are 162 which, in the case of personal formation subjects, are allocated uniquely in the curriculum. The main constituents are the regional retreat, which takes twenty-eight hours over a three-and-a-half-day retreat, involving corporate time, group time and personal reflection time, and the eight group meetings through the year of four hours each which takes thirty-two hours in total. Reflective exercises between group meetings are allocated seven hours, with nine hours allocated to writing up these reflections. Mentoring takes an additional sixteen hours and seventy hours of set readings completes the requirement. Coaching hours are not included in personal formation as they are allocated to each subject's demand hours from the rest of the curriculum. This is because these hours relate specifically to integrating the learning from these subjects.

Differentiation of Levels

Differentiation between the three PF subjects is established by the different formational focus of each subject and the application of formational principles on increasingly broader areas of life and ministry. One subject is designed to build on the other as trainees are led through formation of their personhood, their relationships and finally to their leadership in a ministry context. This allows trainees at different stages of

their course to contribute to the same formation group by applying the formation theme of each specific meeting to different phases of ministry development. This cycle of common themes applied to different layers of ministry allows reinforcement of important concepts without repetition and a chance to self-evaluate the level of implementation of prior learning.

Differentiation is also catered for by the higher levels of leadership expectations on group members. PF2 and PF3 trainees are allocated specific leadership roles within the group, while PF1 trainees are expected to be participants only. Additionally, more autonomy is expected of PF3 trainees in organizing, planning and managing individual personal formation strategies, such as the twenty-four-hour silent retreat, and in the depth and extent of written work.

This brings to an end the description of the formation structure which seeks to more fully cater for the formation of ministry trainees at the seminary. It seeks to make formation the central seminary experience for the trainee, both symbolically and practically. It seeks to build the academic credibility of the program so to be accepted in the curriculum through a solid theological and pedagogical framework, through content coverage and readings, and by incorporating an appropriate, yet rigorous, assessment methodology. It also seeks to offer the practical framework to lead a process which is unique in the curriculum yet achievable by the seminary. In so doing, it seeks to align training for ministry more closely to Jesus' approach.

CHAPTER 7

EVALUATION OF THE FORMATION STRATEGY

This formation strategy was designed and implemented as part of the author's faculty role at ACOM, which included lecturing roles and the responsibility for personal formation. However, the impetus and resolution to create such a program came from the faculty as a whole so as to better cater to the formational needs of trainees. This was given further momentum at that time by the seminary transitioning from a residential model to a decentralised hub model, which made structures more fluid and which created fresh opportunities for the implementation of a radical proposal. This evaluation looks back over the implementation phase to give general reflections, note key achievements, identify major challenges and make recommendations for improvement.

The first experiments with the strategy occurred in the early-2000s with structures and processes designed and implemented by the author in the role of director of formation. With the move in 2004 to a hub structure at nationwide, trainees at ACOM began meeting for formation groups and for lectures in eleven decentralised locations across three different states. Much was learned in these early years as the strategy evolved into a more cohesive and comprehensive structure, which was later accredited as part of

the curriculum, and re-accredited again in 2013. Since its inception, approximately 400 trainees have completed the program over nearly ten years, providing a good basis for feedback and evaluation. Today, the program is being successfully delivered in fifteen hubs across five states to approximately 120 trainees enrolled in personal formation subjects each year. The purpose of this doctoral project is to undergird the strategy for the first time with a systematic academic, theological and pedagogical foundation, to use this foundation to recommend improvements and to provide thorough documentation for the next reaccreditation process. The feedback that follows is drawn from personal interviews by the author with past and existing students and faculty, and from extended interviews with the current director of personal formation who succeeded the author in the role. This is supported by feedback gained from subject evaluations completed by trainees and formation directors at the end of each year. The reflections of past trainees, who now have several years of ministry experience, also provided a useful feedback loop on the effectiveness of the program in forming healthy, spiritually-rich ministers and ministries, which is the program's ultimate aim.

General Reflections

The good news is that the strategy has been clearly successful, with support for the program coming from faculty, stakeholders and most important of all, trainees themselves. It has succeeded in centralizing formation in the trainee's learning journey without adding to the demand hours, thus creating the emotional and mental space to address formational concerns during the crucial years of training. It has created an experiential process which, in the words of one past trainee, leaves participants in awe of

its ability to encourage genuine progress in the formation journey. Despite some profound reticence and anxiety at the start of program due to the unknown structures and unfamiliar requirements, almost all trainees finally report that the personal formation program became the favorite part of their course.

Today, the personal formation strategy is regarded as a distinguishing and attractive feature of ACOM's training model. While most seminaries have community and formation strategies in place, few have centralized them in the program to the same extent or adapted such holistically non-cerebral and intentional approaches in order to achieve it. Those involved in similar functions at other seminaries often express surprise to find a formation strategy integrated into the curriculum and fully functioning, when it frequently remains an aspiration in other contexts.

Implementation

A key reason for the successful implementation for the strategy was the full support and cooperation of the faculty from all subject streams. For example, the strategy requires faculty members to re-write one assessable task for each subject in the form of an integration exercise to be implemented at a ministry context under the supervision of a coach. While the faculty member still grades the work, the form of the task requires some creative thinking and extra effort beyond the normal faculty workload to provide a task relevant to a ministry context. The formation strategy also consumes three subjects from a total degree program of 24 subjects, thus reducing potential enrollments in other subjects. This shift would not be possible without support from the faculty to centralize formation

in the trainee's experience, to support the necessary upheaval to the traditional educational model and to smooth the transition to a new structure over several years.

Implementation occurred concurrently with an overhaul of the ACOM curriculum which brought together educators, theologians, ministry practitioners and spiritual directors to collaborate on a new course design that placed personal spiritual formation as the essential aim of the training. As a result, subject accreditation documentation (now upgraded in Appendix A) for the three personal formation subjects was drafted to meet accreditation demands while still allowing flexibility of process to adequately meet formational needs. Then, the various roles in the formation subjects were defined and an orientation, training and supervision process was designed. Formation directors were personally selected and trained, explaining the roles, responsibilities and resources. Each year in the second month of the course, a one-day training and orientation program is delivered at various hub locations for coaches and mentors after they had been selected by trainees themselves.

Between 2007 and 2011, a more rigorous content base was provided for the course through readings and study content which sought to boost its academic foundation and credibility, and to assuage accreditation concerns. This content added a welcome depth but also engendered a subtle shift in emphasis back towards a more cerebral approach. Maintaining this balance between content and experience became, and continues to be, a key mission for the faculty member responsible for the program. As a result, the process of formation groups was formalized more clearly to preserve it as an essentially relational and experiential context for grappling with formational content in a

personalized, extra-rational and reflective way. Assessment criteria were also refined and consolidated to support this emphasis, although this is still a work in progress.

Achievements

A number of key achievements have been critical to the success of the program. Firstly, the role of the regional retreat in implementing the strategy in the first year, and in ensuring its workability year after year since, has been pivotal. This extended time with each trainee enrolled in personal formation for the year allows for the methodology to be explained, including key logistics and milestones, and for the necessary relationships and contexts to be established. The creation of the formation group at the retreat through storytelling bonds each student into their community of trust and generates the passion to remain connected and to journey together for the year ahead. It also clearly marks of the start of the process which, in a decentralized model, is essential to ensuring timely commencement and completion of all its constituent parts.

Secondly, despite initial concerns about viability, the ecosystem of relationships for each trainee required by the model has been easily fulfilled. Formation directors have been found among the ranks of part time pastors, ex-pastors, church staff members, counsellors and para-church workers and the self-employed. Such people bring skills and insights to the role which have improved the process every year. Although demanding, the role has proved to be very rewarding, and often provides a welcome extra income to support a part-time or itinerant ministry. Most importantly, the impact on both leaders and groups has been profound and enriching to the extent that many formation directors have gone on to implement variants of the model in their own church contexts.

Thirdly, the three-phase subject approach, with its cumulative focus, has created a sense of progression for trainees which helps groups function as vital and engaged communities despite comprising trainees at different stages of their course. This differentiation in levels, starting with formation of the self, through to the self in relationship and onto the self as a leader, allows trainees to engage with the schedule of topics in broader and deeper ways as they progress. It brings clarity to the curriculum, and to the expectations of trainees in the group as they assume an increasing leadership role. It also assists formation directors in allocating group roles and responsibilities appropriately, and also guides them with the challenging task of assessment.

Fourthly, the strategy has comprehensively interlaced academic requirements with formational processes, but this achievement is a tightrope balance that must be continually maintained. The group and mentoring environments at the core of the strategy, and the way content is presented with integrated reflective exercises, all act as reminders that academic content must be processed at a personal level to have formational value, and not simply discussed or memorized. The toolbox of resources provided, with samples shown in Appendix E, contain elements of both content and process to help preserve this balance. The integration task, completed with the coach in a ministry situation, further reinforces this mindset by bringing an aspect from every subject into the context of real life and ministry where the personal implications are explored. These academic and formational processes together have demonstrated an ability to drive a strong connection between both heart and mind in the trainee's journey.

Lastly, perhaps the most significant achievement is that the process creates the necessary vulnerability in trainees to risk embarking on the personal formation journey

with a high degree of authenticity. The various relational contexts of the strategy then provide the contemplative and creative spaces required for this transformation to occur. Almost without exception, trainees report an experience of deeper self-knowledge and interpersonal connectedness than previously experienced, which has triggered and facilitated significant personal spiritual growth. It also provides trainees with an appreciation for the community contexts, the spiritual depth and the self-care needed to sustain their ministry journeys into the future, as well as the necessary habits and structures to put these in place. These achievements suggest the strategy has the capacity to meet most, if not all, of the objectives it sets out to achieve.

Challenges

However, the implementation has not been without its challenges. As inferred already, the biggest of these is achieving an appropriate balance between academic depth and formational intent. Increasing academic content has proved readily capable of overshadowing the group work which is the centerpiece of the program and which has been its distinguishing mark. On the other hand, the personal formation subjects need to retain the character of an open space where lives intersect and are shared under the guidance of the Spirit for the purpose of building healthier ministers. In choosing to center formation in the curriculum, this tension is inevitable, but one that must be kept in constant balance so that the wonder of what happens in both formation groups and mentoring is preserved while academic obligations are met.

A similar challenge lies in the subtle but critical distinction between talking about formation and doing the work of formation. It turns out that even the literature of

contemplative spirituality can be discussed at a cerebral level so that the impact on the soul may be missed. Trainees, supervisors and groups alike can effortlessly drift into the easier task of discussing content from the resources, the readings, or from the wider curriculum and lose focus on the kinesthetic, formational discoveries that the group context is meant to provide. To overcome this, formation directors have frequently found the need to guide groups into a deeper awareness of the present moment, including facing the fear of silence, being present to one another in non-cerebral ways and embracing the unpredictable content that arises from the life journeys of those in the group. While having a plan for each week, groups must be guided to respond to emerging needs and be led by the Spirit's work in group members.

Meeting accreditation criteria is a further challenge in incorporating into the curriculum what are essentially experiential subjects. The terms and processes must be evolved and articulated in ways which fit the tertiary sector, and the ecology of decentralized relationships requires robust supervision. The rigor in the subject goals and course materials needs to be explained and maintained, including the breadth of content and readings provided. Surprisingly, accreditation has turned out to be less problematic than first imagined in implementation at ACOM, due largely to the interest within the accrediting body to better foster personal formation and to the flexibility required in a structure which accredits a consortia of different member institutes. Nonetheless, it is evident that the domains of accreditation and of formation speak two essentially different languages, and constant translation is required for them to understand each other well.

An example of this misunderstanding on both sides is that the modular nature of the whole curriculum and the decentralized structure of the ecosystem of relationships in

formation has sometimes been categorized as a distance learning program, obliging additional structures, such as online communities, to better connect trainees with the seminary. What is easily overlooked is the relational intensity of the formation subjects, which deeply connects trainees with the seminary in an enduring way, providing the necessary interconnectedness for a decentralized program. In this regard, it has proved helpful to describe the overall ACOM program as having three crucial legs, these being the subjects of the general curriculum, the formation group and mentor, and the trainee's coach in their ministry context. Each leg is seen as essential to the stability of the program, without any of which it becomes unstable and topples over.

Another challenge lies in the cost of resourcing the program. At ACOM, the director of formation is a part-time faculty member who oversees the program, continually upgrades resources, and trains and supervises formation directors, while a regional dean of students in each state runs the regional retreat and coordinates the directors, mentors and coaches. In addition, formation directors are also paid as adjunct staff due to the significance of their role, both in terms of time and responsibility as a hub for trainees and their ecosystem of relationships. These costs need to be continually justified in the budget of a seminary by referring to the foundational elements of effective ministry training as argued in Parts 1 and 2 of this project.

A number of challenges have also emerged in the assessment of formation. Initially, assessment was too content-driven and did not allow for the uniquely individual journeys towards growth and health that is the focus of the subjects. Thus, some trainees could score high grades for formation subjects while at the same time struggling with vulnerability, humility or teach-ability in their formation group. As a result, formational

needs were being identified in individuals in the ministry context which were not reflected in their formation grades. On the other hand, when assessment focused on measuring personal and spiritual maturity, trainees were sometimes tempted to reduce vulnerability and authenticity, fearing they would be assessed on any inadequacies shared in the group. This threatened both the effectiveness of the groups and the aims of the course. Therefore, assessment in the spiritual formation subjects came to settle on qualities of engagement in the formation process, such as teachable-ness, interconnectedness with others in the group, reflective ability and the trainee's self-knowledge as demonstrated both in written assessment and group interactions. The grading guide provided in Appendix L was developed to assist by providing clarity to both trainees and directors about exactly what is being assessed.

It has also proven a challenge to maintain consistency in the ways formation directors lead their groups, given their different backgrounds and the many varied theological beliefs and practical understandings of the process of spiritual formation. For example, those with counselling backgrounds may occasionally influence the group towards a kind of group therapy. However, as Parker J. Palmer succinctly summarizes, a formation group "is not a therapeutic community, but a community of truth."[1] Similarly, those with an interest in contemplative spirituality may influence the group solely towards the practice of the presence of God, and those with an interest in ministry capacity may focus on developing capacity as a church leader. Some may take the opportunity to teach others what they know about spirituality, while others may claim that any human-led

[1] Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, 90.

activity in the name of formation is to usurp the role of God. While a diversity of approaches is useful for trainees to broaden their perspective of spiritual formation, clearly a general alignment of assumptions and expectations needs to be established early with formation directors by careful selection and through effective orientation processes at the start of each year. Other components, such as the resources toolbox, the threefold dimensions of spiritual formation, character formation and ministry formation and the yearly schedule of topics, also support the holistic definition of spirituality and the theological and pedagogical principles used in the design of the course.

Reducing complexity also remains an ongoing challenge. Record-keeping, supervisory requirements and accreditation standards all impinge on the simplicity of the program by requiring substantial data collection and completion of forms. Sometimes, these requirements appear to be at odds with the stillness, simplicity and boundaries so important to spiritual health that the course aims to produce. A simplicity beyond complexity needs to be found to administrative requirements to make trainees less busy with paperwork and data collection, and able to fully present on the formation journey.

These challenges show that, despite the clear successes of the strategy, its experiential structure, its uniquely individual focus and its ecology of relationships all make for a demanding program to administer. However, several matters need to be taken into account in its defense. Firstly, as this project argues, a radical approach to ministry training is called for and this, by definition, will require a substantial realignment of expectations and resources which must be faced rather than resisted or ignored. Secondly, the holistic view of spiritual formation which seeks to equip ministry trainees not just spiritually, but also relationally, emotionally and philosophically, cannot be done in a

cerebral way or in a classroom. Thirdly, in many non-campus, decentralized, modular seminaries such as ACOM, this strategy makes a substantial contribution beyond formation by providing a context for connection with the seminary, for community and for student care that would need to be provided anyway. Fourthly, the strategy provides the benefit of a stronger integration of theory and practice for all subjects in the curriculum as a whole, which is an essential pedagogy for holistic ministry preparation.

Recommended Improvements

Given these challenges, it is clear that the program needs a gatekeeper and advocate to articulate and preserve the elements of the program and ensure formation is pursued and not just discussed. Despite the wide support for improved formational outcomes during training, this strategy remains somewhat counter-cultural in an accredited tertiary-level seminary context, and as such will require continual substantiation. This gatekeeper will need to regularly explain to trainees, faculty and accreditation bodies alike the intent of the program and give an apologetic for its uniqueness. He or she will help the focus remain on the devotional sphere more than the rational sphere and safeguard the ecology of relationships as contexts of interpersonal authenticity so that the subject is not drawn back into a cognitive activity or a classroom setting.

Another improvement to simplify terminology could be allocating a theme to all seven formation group meetings rather than using the three dimensions of spiritual formation to categorize them. The themes still cover the three dimensions equally but provide a simpler explanation of the scope and key topics for growth in the formation

strategy. These seven themes could be spiritual maturity, relational capacity, self-awareness, emotional development, vocational development, personal integrity and the qualities of spiritual leadership. The last theme explores the personal qualities of spiritual leaders as opposed to leadership skills, which are provided for in other subjects in the curriculum. This could be reinforced and further simplified by aligning the grading guide to these seven themes which then seeks to measure the depth of engagement, awareness of need and level of application of each theme in each individual's life and ministry.

Some other helpful additions to the curriculum would be better resources in the toolbox in visual and video form to use in leading formation groups, and the addition of a resource providing an emotional vocabulary to help individuals describe their emotional experience and help resist the temptation to define things in cognitive terms. Ways also need to be found to create a better dialogue between a trainee's formational progress and his or her academic progress, so that academic achievement is ideally matched by formational development. However, challenging issues of confidentiality need to be addressed to establish this dialogue and a good solution is still to be found.

When the achievements and challenges outlined above are placed side by side, it is nevertheless clear that the implementation phased has proved the program to be successful in achieving its aims. Feedback from the vast majority of trainees is that it prepares them for ministry at deep personal levels and is one of the most important and rewarding parts of their course. It does so without unduly burdening the trainee's workload or feeling like a supplementary obligation to be reluctantly completed. It seeks to honor the distinctive journey to Christlikeness of each individual, while proactively creating environments where the Spirit may be more readily heard and followed.

Ultimately, it places formation back at the heart of the seminary experience where it belongs.

Given this mix of achievement and challenges, perhaps the key task for the strategy going forward can be summed up as guarding its essential DNA as an experiential, extra-rational and relational pursuit for trainees in the midst of the distinctly cerebral task of attaining a tertiary degree. For while there are many well-meaning voices sympathetic to formation, it is all too easy to slip into the study of spirituality rather than the pursuit of personal formation itself. A study is more easily discussed, controlled, predicted, measured and accredited. In contrast, spiritual growth is frustratingly unpredictable, infinitely variable and can leave those committed to progress frequently at their wits' end. "The wind blows wherever it pleases" says Jesus to Nicodemus as he tries to make logical sense of spiritual transformation. "You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). The challenge, then, for such a program over the next few years may not so much be that it is discarded, but rather that impatience or nervousness with this amorphousness causes the strategy to be redefined away from a holistic, reflective character and be reconfigured into an exploration of spirituality in some cognitive way.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that seminaries face a monumental task in preparing people adequately for ministry. Stretched between the pressures of being a tertiary education institute on the one hand and the compelling need to equip people for a spirituality of the road on the other[1], it is not surprising that something has to give. The growing cry for a deeper focus on formation during the crucial years of training asserts that the time has come for a shift of emphasis in seminaries back towards formation and, if necessary, a radical implementation.

To achieve this requires exertion on both sides. On the one side, formation needs to step up to the academic mark and find a new credibility in the tertiary sector. On the other, the tertiary sector needs to embrace radical methodologies and mindsets to embrace and resource authentic personal formation as an essential task of equipping people for ministry in entirety. Stuck in the middle is the seminary which strives to equip the whole person, and which knows that until these two divergent forces are brought together, the ministry training provided will never be complete.

The challenge lies in the fact that the task for both sides is somewhat counterintuitive. For formation, the challenge is to build a strong academic foundation and establish a rich theology and pedagogy to meet academic concerns in a field which seeks a depth of experience, practical application and a wisdom beyond knowledge. For the tertiary sector and the institute, it is to deconstruct some deeply held values about

[1] Augsburger, *Dissident Discipleship*, 22.

education and ministry to allow for structures, outcomes and processes which are less cerebral and less predictable in a body whose solid ground lies in its academic credibility and thorough procedures. The seminary that wants to cater to both wonders if it can meet either task properly without giving away the birthright of the other.

The contention of this doctoral project is that a robust ministry training process, complete with both academic credibility and formational ability, is possible at seminary. To achieve this, the trainee's learning experience must be centralized in an accredited formational context, which acts to continually integrate the trainee's growing personhood, ministry experience and academic program to prepare them for ministry. As Paul's mentoring of Timothy's ministry shows, he commends him for studying and knowing the Scriptures from infancy, but then reminds him that this is not enough in itself. The ultimate purpose of this knowledge is "for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16).

To make these changes, Part One describes how seminaries must confront the assumptions on which much of their training methodology is based. Assumptions about the condition of the trainee, the role of the seminary and the nature of education need to be challenged in the light of changing times and Jesus' methodology. The inadequacy of these assumptions becomes more apparent the bigger the gap between the person of the minister and their own expectation of themselves and those of their church. To minimize this gap, room must be found in the seminary for a central role for shared spiritual journeys as the biblical mechanism by which leaders and their people can grow into

maturity. As Ephesians describes it, “Speaking the truth in love we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).

The theology and pedagogy of Part Two show what is possible in formation but also why it can never be learned in a classroom. The ramifications of spiritual truths are too easily overlooked and replaced with love for the truths themselves. As Paul warns the Romans, such truths are simply used as weapons against others rather than directives for the self; “Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4). Knowledge of the Bible, theology or professional ministry practice will not prepare a person for ministry unless that knowledge is used to renew the minister’s life. As the parable of the sower in Matthew 13 teaches, the truths of God bear no fruit unless the soil is first tilled so it can take root and kept nourishing so it can grow. This is the main reason personal spiritual formation needs a central role in any training experience and in any ongoing ministry.

However, the formation pedagogy will be different from other pedagogies, and will require resourcing, roles and procedures which do not currently exist in many seminaries. Part Three of this Doctorate project aims to provide the structures, mechanisms and reflection on experience to implement these pedagogies in seminaries without unearthing their foundations. Naturally, any successful implementation will also require flexibility and keen support from faculty and stakeholders. However, the benefits of trainees having the time, space and context to integrate the learning from their subjects into life will be its own reward across the full curriculum.

This spiritual formation strategy has been designed specifically for application at ACOM, using a decentralized, modular teaching structure. However, this does not

preclude its use in a residential format, where it may be employed to deepen the formation journey. Therefore, the strategy has been written to be transferrable to other seminaries who find it of use. It aims to explain in enough detail the unique functions, processes and roles required to be able to apply them in another context.

This project does not allow the space to provide the full range of resources provided in the formation director's toolbox. However, the sample provided in the Appendices from each dimension of spiritual formation shows the range and scope of the resources required so that others may contribute resources drawn from their own life and ministry experience. It provides a template for explaining the academic and theological foundations of a resource, providing an adequate orientation to the trainee and the formation director, and giving the practical guidance to allow the resource to be used in a wide range of contexts.

It is worth stating that this course is not designed to replace existing subjects in the curriculum on spirituality where the purpose may be to study a particular era, person, group or technique, or to understand the range of Christian spiritual experience and practices and teach specific strategies for today. While some such practices are included in the course, the purpose is limited to the use of such practices to assist in the journey to become spiritually formed for ministry.

Nor is this course designed as the content to teach a subject in spiritual formation. Though they underpin the course design and delivery, the theology and pedagogy outlined in Part Two barely rate a mention in the actual course content or delivery, although they are explored to some extent in the orientation and supervision of

key roles in the ecosystem of relationships. However, the content of this project could be used to create such a course and provide a useful addition to the curriculum.

While this course utilizes a variety of processes and contexts to cater to individual differences, more research is needed on how different individuals experience different spiritual processes and whether they work equally well for all kinds of people. Particular interest would be on whether affective qualities like personality or learning style might impact the effectiveness of the recommended spiritual formation approaches. It may be that to create a helpful process for all types, a variety of action-reflection options may need to be offered for each resource.

Experience so far shows that the strategy is a workable solution for a seminary. It has been met with enthusiasm by trainees despite the considerable demands of working with the ecosystem of relationships and connecting their learning with their ministry context. In fact, both the workload and the effort required in the emotional and spiritual spheres has surprised many trainees, who may have originally thought of the course as an informal addendum with well-meaning but largely benign outcomes compared to their other subjects. However, its integration into the demand hours of the curriculum and its decentralized form based close to the trainee's ministry location has produced a workable commitment that most trainees would not be without. Most importantly, it has succeeded in convincing trainees and faculty alike that transformation occurs through revelation, not information, and has thus cemented its role in the seminary training strategy.

Ultimately, this course seeks to transform the trainee's experience of seminary rather than transforming the seminary itself. It acknowledges and preserves the many academic achievements that are essential milestones and obligations of life in a modern-

day tertiary institute. However, it does aim to shift the locus of the training experience to the personhood of the minister so that trainees might "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). It seeks to create a context which emulates Jesus' seminary of life, where knowledge informs practice and practice enlightens knowledge, so that trainees might learn to be disciples first and ministers second.

APPENDIX A

ACCREDITATION OUTLINES

PF1 – The Personhood of the Minister

Description: This unit promotes self-awareness and explores the impact of personal issues from the student's life and history on their functioning in ministry. It identifies personal health as a basis for effective ministry and helps them establish a self-care strategy and a basic ministry philosophy. It enables the student to discover their personal spirituality, and begins them on their journey of contemplative spirituality to enrich their inner loves for sustainable ministry.

Specific Outcomes
Knowledge:

a. Understand basic principles of personal spiritual health and the structure of an effective personal formation strategy
b. Understand the formational power of culture, and assess the influence of culture on the student's lifestyle and values

Skills:

a. To be able to engage with the Bible reflectively and devotionally
b. To articulate a personal philosophy of ministry as a function of God-given passion and giftedness

Values:

a. To value healthy relationships and accountability as a foundation for emotional and spiritual health
b. Value being authentic in the presence of others and of God

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PF2 – The Personhood of the Minister in Relationship with Others

Description: This unit builds on the personal awareness and skills in PF1 and applies them to the interpersonal sphere. It helps students become aware of their relational style, habits and needs, and to value and participate in trust relationships and corporate spirituality. It provides a framework for understanding power, trust and ethical issues in ministry. It helps students articulate a personal ministry philosophy.

Specific Outcomes
Knowledge

a. Understand the basis for healthy relationships, including issues of power and trust, and to recognize when relationships are unhealthy
b. Know how to design and use extended time alone with God usefully for formation

Skills

a. To be self-aware in relationship and be able to form and maintain trust relationships
b. To be able to reflect on ministry experience and be cognizant of how personal behavior of those in ministry impacts others

Values

a. To value the relational nature of ministry as modelled by Jesus, and maintaining heathy relationships with God, self and others as a foundation for healthy ministry and a healthy church
b. To value time alone with God and hearing God speak through Scripture as a basic formation philosophy

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PF3 – The Personhood of the Minister as a Leader

Description: This unit builds on the learning of PF 1 & 2 and applies them to the student as a spiritual leader. It helps students identify, evaluate and develop their leadership style and to articulate a Personal Development Plan for ongoing health and growth. It provides skills in leading others into spiritual vitality, and helps students map a direction for their ministry future. It supports the implementation of strategies for healthy, sustainable, long-term ministry.

Specific Outcomes

Knowledge

a. Understand the principles of leading an effective personal formation process
b. Know how to use retreating principles for formation

Skills

a. To be able to establish and lead a formational community of trust with accountability which is gracious and life-giving
b. To be able to manage a 24-hour personal retreat as an effective spiritual formation strategy

Values

a. To value dependence on God as a Christian leadership principle and coping style
b. To value interconnectedness with others in leadership and to respect the spiritual journey of others as both unique and instructive

APPENDIX B

REGIONAL FORMATION RETREAT SCHEDULE

time	Event	explanation
Monday		
0930 – 1500	**Formation Director Orientation and Resourcing** (on-site. See Appendix for resources)	The formation directors who will lead the groups will not necessarily be seminary faculty, but will live near the 'hubs' where students will meet in their groups, and be chosen for their experience, training and openness to processes of spiritual formation. Due to this geographic displacement, the retreat will probably be the first time they meet each other face to face. While resourcing and orientation will be provided online, the opportunity of being together will provide for experience, practice, questions and alignment.
1600	A **new student dinner and orientation** may be held with regional staff and Formation Directors	This student retreat may be the first time for incoming students to meet each other and the seminary faculty. This will smooth their introduction and allay their nerves beginning studies and meeting their group
1930	**Students arrive** / settle in/register	
2000	Introduction to Formation – engaging and fun introductory program by staff and continuing students	Builds a regional identity for the student body (ACOM operates in 6 distinct regions in Australia and the UK). Orientation to the personal formation courses and their need and purpose is provided.
2100	Supper, with Evening Ritual to close the day	To close the day, an evening ritual from Ignatian or Benedictine spirituality will be explained and lead, to introduce a contemplative element and begin to break down preconceptions about liturgy in general.
Tuesday		
0830	Time alone with God – begin with 15 minutes guided worship, possibly using music depending on the talents in the group for the year. Try to use a variety of worship experiences to stretch their spiritual experience, such as liturgy, corporate silence, icons spiritual discipline or contemplation.	To introduce concept of discipline in spiritual formation, and stretch experiences and understanding of types and experiences of spirituality, building growing appreciation for spirituality in other branches of the church, especially Catholic and Orthodox. Explanation to guide this time will be provided by a formation director, to begin the experience of reflective processes in the

		presence of God. For some, this will be new experience without a leader delivering a Bible study.
1000	Morning Break	
1030	Formation Groups 1	The first session of 2 life stories, group responses and prayer. See "Life Stories" resource for information on rationale and instructions
1230	Lunch and Free Time	
1530	Afternoon Break	
1600	Formation Groups 2	2 life stories, group responses and prayer
1800	Dinner	
1930	Celebration worship in music night	Not too emotionally heavy as they will be exhausted from stories. Fun and uplifting
2100	Supper with Evening Ritual	
Wednesday		
0830	Time alone with God	Formation directors conduct a mid-retreat evaluation with the lecturer or seminary regional leader to manage any issues arising in groups and provide support in the face of surprises thrown up by life stories.
1000	Morning Break	
1030	Formation Groups 3	2 life stories, group responses and prayer
1230	Lunch and Free Time	With organized physical outdoor option
1530	Afternoon Tea	
1600	Formation Groups 4	2 life stories, group responses and prayer
6pm	Dinner	
1930	Evening program at regional staff's discretion	NOTE: ensure dates for the 8 Formation Group meetings are scheduled before retreat ends
2100	Supper with Evening Ritual	
Thursday		
0830	Time alone with God	Note that for the group to form, all stories must be told by the end of retreat. This session may be used as another formation group if needed to ensure all stories have been completed
1000	Morning Break	
1030	Communion & Closure	Led by faculty member in charge, and with each formation director having a role
1130	Pack and clean Retreat Site	
1200	Lunch (optional)	

APPENDIX C

PROPOSED FORMATION GROUP MEETING SCHEDULE

Time allocation	Part	notes
1 hour	**1. Reconnecting**: Catch ups and prayer (group or pairs. May be over lunch)	
30 minutes	**2. Insight** - Devotional Reading of Scripture applied to life and ministry	Student led
1 hour	**3. Formation Resource** Discussion of resource reflection papers – in pairs or subgroups resource for next meeting chosen and distributed from the allocated theme	Process led by formation director
1 hour	**4. Workshopping** – creative environments using events raised in trainee's lives an ministries. If nothing arises, formation director chooses another resource from the toolbox.	Process led by formation director
30 mins	**5. Prayer** for one another	

APPENDIX D

HOW TO WRITE A BIBLE INSIGHT

Personal Formation [General Resources: **THE BIBLE INSIGHT**]

Explaining the Bible Insight

The Bible is written not just that we may know the truth, but also that we may be changed. "All Scripture is God breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16). Alister McGrath, a respected Bible scholar, says "Scripture itself will not change us, but responding to it will."[1]

Many Christian traditions have "taught, rebuked and corrected" well, but have tended to leave "training in righteousness" and "being thoroughly equipped" to chance, assuming it would naturally follow from correct theology. This attitude has more to do with rationalism rather than good biblical application. It led to a number of useful Bible resources and research tools that we enjoy today, but it also turned the study of the Bible into a cerebral activity, with a focus on grasping doctrinal truth.

More recently, allegorical interpretation of Scripture has been popularized, leading to strange personalized interpretations that defy (and sometimes resent) logic. God's message is applied to a specific person or situation, often with little thought to the original context or good exegesis. While this may have breathed excitement into reading Scripture, it can hardly be regarded as responsible.

The answer is to hold both together, as for example, the monastic traditions who have always believed there was in each text something for them now.[2] Richard Peace says, "the choice in Bible study is not between dry scholasticism and irresponsible subjectivism. We need both approaches. We need to listen to Scripture with both our minds and our hearts."[3] The "Bible Insight" is designed to do just that, and gives meaning and orientation to our desire to hear God speak through Scripture.

A Bible Insight is formational reading of Scripture and then sharing the impact of this with others. Whereas informational reading seeks to protectively control the text by analysis and problem solving, formational reading regards motive as more important than method, aiming to meet God in the text. In his book, *Shaped by the Word*, Robert Mulholland provides six characteristics of formational reading:

1. It aims for quality rather than quantity. Rather than concern to get through a passage, I may find myself in a "holding pattern" over a sentence or verse. The point is meeting God in the text.
2. It probes deeper levels of meaning rather than a simple linear interpretation
3. It lets the text master the reader, rather that attempt to master the text
4. It makes the text the subject of the reading relationship - not an object we control
5. It requires a nimble receptive, loving approach, not analytical, critical judgmental. There must be a willing pliability on the part of the reader
6. It requires an openness to mystery, rather than a problem-solving approach[4]

One point of warning – formational reading is not a comfortable task. "The Word probes us at the point of our unlikeness to Christ."[5] To open ourselves to God in this way invites him to show us all in our lives that is dysfunctional or limiting our wholeness. However, God's Spirit is ready to help it if we pause long enough in the Word to listen.

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[1] Alister McGrath, *Spiritual Theology*, 126.
[2] Benedict Groeschel, *Spiritual Traditions*, 46.
[3] Richard Peace, *Contemplative Bible Reading* 18.
[4] Robert Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation*, 55-59.
[5] Ibid., 105.

Leading a Bible Insight

Step 1. Alone

The best source for an insight is your own personal devotional reading of Scripture. If you are reading through a section of the Bible in your own time alone with God, continue this habit. Then adapt an old pattern of devotional reading popularized by Scripture Union – Pray, Read, Reflect, Read, Journal, Pray

Pray – ask God to meet you in the text today, and to bring your attention to that which he wants to speak to you about. Robin Maas and Gabriel O'Donnell say,"It is not possible to practice the presence of God without an increase in personal vulnerability and willingness to risk some stillness (*Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church,* 264.) so take the time to be still and vulnerable to God to be ready to meet him. Perhaps you can use some relaxation or meditation techniques. We will cover this in the first few meetings on your formation Group.

Read – When you are inwardly still and open, read the passage through slowly until something leaps out at you – a verse, a concept, a phrase or even a word. Ask "Is God bringing this to my attention? If so, which part or point in particular? What is happening to me as I listen?" Stay with the passage, re-reading it as necessary to let these questions sink in and to give yourself space to listen to God.

Reflect – Dig deeper by asking some questions. For example; "Why is God drawing my attention to this point? What is he teaching me? How is he correcting my ideas? Is he encouraging, challenging, or guiding me? What is he saying about the direction my life should take? How is he training me in righteousness?" (Richard Peace *Learning to Love God)*

Read – Go back to the passage and read some supporting resources like a commentary to check your reading and understanding of the passage. Is it consistent with the intent of the passage? Take a moment to inform your sense of what God is saying to check you are not being irresponsibly subjective and a inferring a meaning that the passage could never condone.

Journal –Ask "If I was to take this passage seriously, how would my life be different?" Write down your God-inspired responses so you can share with your Formation Group how God spoke and from where.

Pray – ask God to help you implement what he has asked you to do from this passage today.

Sharing with the Group

Read your passage aloud, then feedback to the group how God spoke to you, using your journaling as a reference. You are free to share as much or as little of what you have written, and it does not need to be submitted. However, ensure that you share enough to bring the others in the group into your experience of God in the passage, and for them to be encouraged and/or challenged as well.

Group Response

Invite each person in turn to respond with how your insight has impacted them. They also may sense God speaking to them, or may share an impact regarding your interrelationship. Invite someone in the group to pray for you for your insight to settle deep into your being and become a part of your formation.

Further Reading

Hans-Reudi Weber, *The Bible Comes Alive*, Judson Press, 1996.
Mark S. J. Thibodeaux, *Armchair Mystic*, Cincinnatti: St Anthony Messenger Press, 2001.
Richard Peace, *Contemplative Bible Reading (* Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1998.
Richard Peace, *Learning to Love God* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress), 1998.
Robin Maas & Gabriel O'Donnell. *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church* (Nashville: Abingdon 1990), 264.
McGrath, Alister. *Christian Spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE RESOURCES

Personal Formation **[1 – Spiritual Formation: COUNTER-CULTURE]**

Formation Director's Notes

Culture is a student's context for formation and exerts enormous formational power in ways mostly underestimated or even ignored altogether. Unfortunately, many elements of contemporary Western culture are antithetical to biblical values, and serve to stunt spiritual growth rather than assist people to grow into Christ-likeness. Because of its pervasive presence and power, we must "become critically self-aware of the culture in which we participate, to show the difference between the Christian story and the many stories of our culture that bid for our commitment and loyalty."[1]

This resource is designed to help students analyze the culture in which they are immersed, and become aware of the power of culture to influence values and behaviors. It begins an exploratory journey of how their own lifestyles have been influenced, and ways in which they have inadvertently absorbed and are constantly reinforcing non-biblical values into their own belief system.

Biblical foundation

This is not a new problem. Christians throughout history have lived in cultures contradictory – even antagonistic – to Christian values. Jesus distinguishes his Kingdom as being "not of this world" (John 18:36" and describes the counter-cultural difference in the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 5-7). Paul warns against living by the "standards" and the "patterns" of this world even though we live in it (2 Cor. 10:2-3, Rom.12:2). This radical distinction is to be expected since "the sinful mind is hostile to God" (Rom. 8:7) because "everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the Father but from the world" (1 John 2:15). Finding oneself disagreeing with culturally accepted values is par for the course for the Christian who takes discipleship seriously.

Christian History:

Several questionable approaches have been tried to resist the negative influence of culture, which may merit some discussion in the group. Some seek to withdraw completely from the world – either physically or just relationally - while others mount a campaign to "Christianize" secular culture. Some rail against the cultural evils of the time, hoping the world will take notice and change, and perhaps also to appease their own conscience. Many simply give in and live almost undistinguishable from the culture around them. None of these strategies have use for those who seek to live, work and relate within everyday culture and Christ's salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16). However, Christian tradition is full of examples of those who sought to engage life counter-culturally through deliberate discipleship to better imitate Christ. Far from disassociated communes, monastic movements such as the Franciscans and Benedictines sought to engage their communities with the simple principles of love of God and love neighbor as "contemplatives in action." They both stood against those who sought to withdraw[2] and aimed to reform a church that had become too comfortable with culture. Luther wrote his "95 Theses" which became the catalyst for the Reformation in response to the counter-cultural need to live for Christ, John Wesley founded a discipleship strategy to reform the church that was so helpful that it founded a whole movement almost by accident.

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[1]Gangel and Wilhoit (eds.), *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Spiritual Formation*. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1994), 115.

[2] For example, the Cathars who denigrated the world of matter as sinful and sought to spiritualize faith

This is perhaps the most critical issue the church faces for renewal in our time. Ours is a post-Christendom age, with a culture with regards the freedom to choose without constraints of rights and wrongs as non-negotiable. "We are coming to see that there is a sharp distinction between the gospel and culture, which is surely one necessary condition of the (post-) modern church recovering its identity."[3]

Issues to be aware of:
Some students may have a background in any of the four approaches to culture described as questionable above.

Cross discipline information:
Sociological axiom that "those who are least conscious of the influence of culture are the ones most influenced by it"

Possible discussion questions:
Is it possible to avoid being influenced by our culture?
What unhealthy ways have Christians used to resist unbiblical elements of culture?
How should you react when faced with an expression of culture which is opposed to your Christian worldview?
How can we detect ways in which we have inadvertently adopted unbiblical values from our culture?
What movies have you seen recently? Was there anything that made you uncomfortable? Laugh? Talk about why.

[3] Abraham, William J. *The Logic of Renewal*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 154.

Introduction

Many influences have shape us into who we are and, in fact, we continue to be shaped every day. One of the gifts of Postmodernism has been an increased awareness of our human interconnectedness; structurally and relationally, globally and locally. The Modernist myth of the autonomous and self-determining man, totally free and self-actualized may persevere in the speeches of some motivational speakers, but there is a growing acceptance/awareness for the rest of us of just how influenced by others we really are. We are moved by the stories of others, convinced by their experiences and enamored by gurus. Yet we still underestimate how much of our thinking and beliefs actually come from others. We jealously guard our freedom to choose, and continue to believe we are truly free beings.

We rarely stop to think about the sources of our ideas or beliefs, perhaps believing they come from Scripture yet, unlike the Bereans in Acts 17:11, we often only casually search the Scriptures to see if what others say is true. We naively believe we are choosing for ourselves, all the while being inadvertently carried along by the values and culture in which we are immersed. Take for instance our view of sexuality, which is the most cherished and morally sanctified freedom of postmodern morality;"[4] the Bible teaches a view strongly in contrast to popular culture - from the sanctity of marriage to homosexuality - yet we are powerfully influenced by our sexually-charged culture to tamper with the evidence, often realizing only later in life the peril in which we have put ourselves.

To live as disciples of Christ in such an environment, we need to become expert observers of culture to perceive ways in which we are being formed by it contrary to God's nature. This is not to withdraw from it, nor seek to enforce Christian beliefs on others, but to find ways to positively relate as people "sent into the world" but "not of the world"(John 17:15-19). We need to exegete our culture as well as Scripture in order to find the points of connection and dissonance, so we might know when to resist and when to cross the bridge to others.

One key window into contemporary culture is television, which acts as mirror, influencer and evangelist for secular culture. Consider the following statistics; by the end of high school, a person has on average:

- watched 23,000 hours of TV – more time than they have spent in class.
- witnessed 40,000 murders (8,000 of them before they reach high school) and 200,000 acts of violence.
- watched 1,000,000 advertisements. In 2007, the estimated effort at marketing to kids amounted to 15 billion ads, and resulted in 30 million dollars in purchases
- spent 30 hours a week watching TV[5]

In comparison how many hours do teenagers spend doing healthy things – physically, emotionally and morally? Consider what impact this has on our values and worldview about

[4] Abraham, William J. *The Logic of Renewal*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmas, 2003, 147.
[5] Statistics from Richard Peace, in CN705 Spiritual Formation in the Postmodern World, Fuller Seminary, 2008.

what is important. In this session are several exercises on observing television to begin to develop the skill of exegeting culture.

After completing the resource write a one-page reflection commenting on the influence of TV and the formational power of culture on how this influenced your formation as a person. How does this reality impact the people with whom you minister?

Further Reading

Detweiler, Craig and Barry Taylor, *A Matrix of Meanings*. Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 2003.
Abraham, William J. *The Logic of Renewal*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003.
Paggitt, Doug, *Reimagining Spiritual Formation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.
Hipps, Shane. *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture: How Media Shapes Faith, the Gospel, and Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.
Kilbourne, Jean. *Deadly Persuasion: Why Women and Girls Must Fight the Addictive Power of Advertising.* NY: The Free Press, 1999.
Godawa, Brian. *Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films with Wisdom and Discernment,* Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002.
Romanowski, William D. *Popo Culture Wars: Looking for God in Popular Culture.* Grand Rapids MI: Brazos Press (Baker), 2007.
Shultz, Quentin. *Habit of the High Tech Heart: Living Virtuously in the Information Age.* Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2002.
Spencer, William David & Aida Besancon, eds. *God Through the Looking Glass: Glimpses form the Arts.* Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1998.

Television: The Pulse of our Culture

View the four types of television programs listed below as screened on national networks to complete this resource. Note how they portray contemporary, particularly observing the world-view and values assumed and affirmed. List the date, time, and channel of each show you watched. You may like to record the shows so that you can go back over them in detail.

1. A Reality Show

Date:	Time:	Channel:
Discuss the nature of the reality being portrayed on this show. Is it real reality or contrived reality? Watch how the show is put together, remembering that it is necessary for a camera crew to be present to shot it and that the actual sequence is a later product of editing.		
What are the implications of this reality?		
Why do these shows have such an appeal today?		

2. A Situation Comedy

Date:	Time:	Channel:
Identify each character in the show; the "type" of character each is (e.g. a scatterbrained adolescent girl with boys on her mind) and whether the character is a positive or negative figure.		
character	**Type of character**	**Positive or negative figure? Why?**
1. What is the theme of the show?		
2. What values are promoted in the show directly or indirectly?		
3. What is the "good life" according to this show?		
4. For one continuous minute, count the number of "cuts" (e.g. how many times the picture switches to a new angle, position, different setting, etc.).		

3. The Evening News

Date:		Time:	Channel:
segment	**length**	**Nature of visuals used**	**Summary of content**

a) How many news stories are covered in one-half hour? What are the implications of this?

b) How is the information transmitted?

c) The implicit agenda: what is of concern to the nation that evening?

4. Advertisements (copy this resource as needed)

Date:	Time:	Channel:

Watch the ads in the gap between two shows on a national TV network (not local or cable TV) and observe the following (one section per ad):

Product:	**Length:**	**Theme:**
a) The central image of the ad:		
b) The values promoted in the ad:		

Product:	**Length:**	**Theme:**
a) The central image in the ad:		
b) The values promoted in the ad:		

Product:	**Length:**	**Theme:**
a) The central image in the ad:		
b) The values promoted in the ad:		

Product:	**Length:**	**Theme:**
a) The central image in the ad:		
b) The values promoted in the ad:		

Product:	**Length:**	**Theme:**
a) The central image in the ad:		
b) The values promoted in the ad:		

Product:	**Length:**	**Theme:**
a) The central image in the ad:		
b) The values promoted in the ad:		

Ad 1: Product:	**Length:**	**Theme:**
a) The central image in the ad:		
b) The values promoted in the ad:		

Ad 2: Product:	**Length:**	**Theme:**
a) The central image in the ad:		
b) The values promoted in the ad:		

Comment on the production values of these ads in comparison to the other three types of shows you viewed: (e.g. their visual appeal and impact; the quality of cinematography, sound, acting, editing, etc.)

Adapted from Richard Peace, CN705 Spiritual Formation and Discipleship in the Postmodern World, Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, CA. USA

Formation Director's Notes

We cannot escape relationships in ministry, yet there are few places where we can learn how to build healthy relationships. It is often assumed that the type of person who is called to ministry will have all the "people skills" they need, which sadly is not always true. The state of a few of our key relationships can have deep impact on our ability to relate well with others and with God. Perhaps it is because God is invisible, that our visible relationships matter so much to the state of our faith (and vice versa) and to our sense of who we are. "Self-consciousness" says Anderson "is intrinsically social,"[1] so our perception of who we are and how we function cannot be separated from our interaction with those significant others around us. "Unsettledness" (a sense that all is not right, and/or that there is something I need/want to do) in one area will bring unsettledness into the others. Thus unsettled relationships in one area of our life can limit our capacity to be settled with God and in our overall sense of relational settledness. Significantly for being equipped for a relational role and environment, the impact of certain key relationships is profound in. This is important for ministry candidates who need to be able to relate freely, lovingly and responsibly towards others.

Traditionally, evangelicals have viewed things less holistically – as less of a system and more in isolation. We have tended to cut life into discreet segments, regarded as having limited influence or interaction with each other. We have also viewed them hierarchically, believing that if we got our faith "right," the rest would fall into place. Unfortunately, things aren't that simple, and unhealthiness in one part of the system impacts the relationships, values and emotions in the rest. In reality, our relationships are more like an interconnected web – when one part is weak, the whole web is weak. Often, intractable problems can only be dealt with by facing the reality of the broken relationship, ensuring the person exercises personal responsibility to deal with whatever they can for their part to bring resolution and reconciliation, and then accepting that they have done all that they can. When this is achieved, we are often surprised to find that our relationship with God has improved as well. The web has settled down.

This exercise is designed to help the trainee reflect on the healthiness of five key relationships and to see the interconnectedness between them. Respect for the individual is critical, as people should only be asked to share to the level at which they are comfortable. Begin kinesthetically, by asking for a volunteer to share with the group. Have them walk down the room on a continuum, stopping at 5 places each representing one key relationship, and ask them to share how settled they are in this particular relationship. Then have the student reflect on how they felt, what surprises occurred, and what they can do to help get any relationship more settled. "Settled" is the key word, as resolution or reconciliation may not be possible. They may need help from their mentor or a counsellor in dealing with this.

Biblical foundation

Christianity is essentially relational. Christ calls us his friends (John 15:15), he urged us to address God as Father (Mat. 6:9) and we are to treat each other as fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters (1 Tim. 5:1-2). The way we treat one another is at the core of living the Christian faith (there are 54 "one-anothers" in the New Testament), and reveals our true character. In particular, grudges and resentments can easily be carried from the hurts and misunderstandings in our key relationships, and we are warned in Scripture about these in rather urgent terms; "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Mat. 5:23-24). Theology cannot be separated from the quality of our relationships. In particular, the extended family is

[1] Anderson, Ray S. *Self Care.* Wheaton, IL: Bridgepoint, 1995, 52.

part of God's strategy for our sense of belonging and care: "God sets the lonely in families" (Ps. 68:6), and the New Testament urges us to pay attention to adequately providing for our families (1 Tim 5:4-8) and points to good management of family relationships as a criterion for church leadership (1 Tim 3:4). In our day, individualism and financial freedom have eroded family ties in ways different from Bible times, frequently requiring support and healing to mend.

Cross discipline information:
Psychology recognises that every human being is programmed (created) to interact with others. The healthy presence of others –primarily our family relationships - is critical for the emergence and healthy development of the self. Where this presence is dysfunctional – for example being uninvolved or over-involved - this leads to disorders of the self and damage to personhood. Thus inadequacies in our key relationships in both the past and present impacts in turn how we relate to others in general, and often leads to dysfunctional behaviours like projection, transference and addictions, which can wreak havoc in our broader relationships. Psychology calls this interconnectedness "emotional systems theory," and the booklist includes books for further reading on this topic. Also of interest is "Attachment Theory" - another growing field of enquiry researching the notion that we are only as healthy as the health of our attachments to others, and seeks understand and undo ways in which we carry over our patterns of relating in our key relationships to other people to build a strong network of healthy relationships as a strategy for personal health.

Issues to be aware of:
Be prepared for strange results. This is a classic creative environment where God can move. The presence of praying, silent but affirming others in a trust environment makes the verbalising significant, and the emotions involved often surprise. It encourages a self-honesty, as the sharer is affirmed by the patient silence of others to experience all the emotions they encounter, which in another context they may hide from. Also be aware of some who may be rationalising unresolved pain or broken relationships.

Note that some may object to the use of psychology as unchristian. For some this is a (perhaps valid) reaction to the proliferation of pop-psychology preaching which does neither Christianity nor psychology justice. For others is may be seated in an almost superstitious reaction to what they do not understand, or to an inadequate picture formed from piecing together small and inaccurate snippets of information about Freud or Jung, or some psychological techniques. Remind them that there are many Christian psychologists, who see cooperation between the two in bringing healing to people. Remind them also that we use professionals in all walks of life from doctors to financial advisors, and in essence this is no different. Also worth noting is that many Christian psychologists, like Arch Hart quoted below, have stated that psychology on its own cannot bring healing, because it cannot understand Christian concepts like forgiveness and our need for redemption.

Possible discussion questions:
What does "settledness" in a relationship mean?
How can you become settled in a relationship with a person who is no longer living?
How can you become settled in a relationship with someone who refuses to speak/relate with you?
What is the role of "letting go" in bringing settledness to a relationship?
Christian psychologist Arch Hart says "Christ is the true answer for the self's problems."[2] How can psychology and God cooperate?

[2] Hart, Arch. *Me Myself and I: How Far Should we go in the Search for Fulfillment*? Ann Arbor: Servant, 1992. 23.

Introduction

God has made us as relational beings, so we are naturally susceptible the quality of our relationships. Especially critical are our relationships with those with whom we are related - by blood or marriage - known as our "key relationships" because of their enormous capacity to wound when things go wrong. "Unfinished business" in these key relationships sets unhealthy patterns of relatedness to others, as our woundedness wounds others if it is not first being healed in us. Unfortunately, no-one comes through childhood unscathed. Even parents with the best of intentions and devotion to childrearing will make mistakes. The vagaries of life will also throw surprises good and bad into the pot, so that we emerge into adulthood in various states of readiness for it. More than likely, most of us will have some reckoning to do in our key relationships before becoming whole or even fully adult. A sense of "settledness" in our personhood is inextricably linked to our level of settledness in these key relationships. Unfortunately, many of us never undertake the hard work of this reckoning, and remain needy children or adolescents in adult bodies.

This can cause havoc in ministry. We may try to fill the inadequacies with inappropriate relationships or improper ways of relating of all sorts, from seeking love to domination. We may seek social approval to plug holes in our relational needs, forcing others to play roles they have not agreed to. We take out unresolved relational issues on others who have nothing to do with it. "we cannot hear those in authority when we turn every conversation into adolescent struggle with ghosts of our parents."[3] In order to relate freely and lovingly to others, we have to deal with unsettledness and unmet needs in our key relationships.

In this session we look explore our settledness in our five key relationships – that is, who I am as a

- daughter/son
- sister/brother
- wife/husband
- mother/father
- child of God

These relationships are linked in a web, where each impacts the other. The Formation Group cannot repair these relationships for you or make them healthy, but they can share the journey to discover the areas of pain or unsettledness that still need addressing. Your mentor or a counsellor may need to take this further – your formation Director can help you with this. Note that the objective is to become "settled" in these key relationships. As attractive as it is, ideals like reconciliation, trust or even a 'heart-to-heart' may not be possible right now (or ever, say for example, if the other person is no longer alive). However, we can become settled that for our part, we have released any issues in that relationship.

[3] Joan Chittister, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 22.

Before the next meeting, take one hour to complete the resource. Wherever there is unsettledness, develop some ideas for something you can do to help make this relationship more settled. You may like to involve your Formation Director or Mentor if needed for ideas. If you have a particularly troubling relationship amongst this group, try to think of one small step you could take to relate perhaps over an areas of shared interest. Do not be ashamed to get some counselling to help you being settledness to this relationship.

See below for recommended reading if you would like to understand this topic more

Further Reading

Carkhuff, R.R. *Helping and Human Relations.* Amherst, MA: Human Resources Development Press, 1984.

Carlson, Randy L. *Father Memories: How to Discover the Unique Powerful and Lasting Impact Your Father Has on Your Adult Life and Relationships, Chicago,* IL: Moody, 1992.

Clinton, Tim & Gary Sibcy, *Attachments: Why You Feel and Act the Way You Do*, Integrity Publishers, 2002.

Friedman, Edwin H. *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church.* New York: Guilford Press, 1985.

Hart, Archibald D. Me, Myself and I: How Far Should We Go in Our Search for Fulfillment? Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1992.

Hart, Archibald D. & Sharon Hart Morris. *The Safe-Haven Marriage.* Nashville, TE: W Publishing Group, 2003.

McClung, Floyd, Jr. *The father heart of God: experiencing the depths of His love for you.* Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1985.

Oates, Wayne E. *Christ and Selfhood.* Association Press, 1961.

Richardson, Ronald Wayne, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor: Family Systems Theory and the Pastor's Own Family.* Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2005.

Richardson, Ronald Wayne, *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership and Congregational Life.* Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996.

Schwanz, Judith, *Blessed Connections: Relationships that Sustain Vital Ministry.* Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute 2008.

Seamands, David, A. *Healing for Damaged Emotions.* Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1981.

Steinke, Peter L. *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems.* Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute 2006.

Steinke, Peter L. *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach. (2nd ed)* Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute 2006.

Key Relationships – how settled am I?

Rate your feeling of "settledness" in each of these Key Relationships: 1 = very unsettled to 5 = very settled

Me as a…	rating	Areas of Unsettledness	One thing I can do to make a start on settledness
Daughter/ Son			
Mother / Father			
Sister / Brother			
Wife/Husband Girlfriend / Boyfriend			
Child of God			

Adapted from a concept by Les Scarborough, John Mark Ministries, Australia

Formation Director's Notes

Self-care entails taking the steps necessary to keep our whole selves healthy in line with God's design of our bodies – including body, mind, emotions and spirits. The problem is that we are simply not designed for the pace of modern life. In times when the average day involved walking, working and waiting, some self-care was enforced. Today, our transport systems to make us fast but don't keep us fit, and we travel alone instead of chatting with companions. When we get home, TV gives us virtual relationships which mask our actual aloneness, and steals our mental "down-time" and emotional space. Our long days and late nights keep us moving so we don't ever come face to face with reality.

These modern day problems are exacerbated in ministry, where we frequently justify busyness as the Lord's work and frequently have too little support or supervision to hold us to account for the pact of our lifestyle. Many pastors remain alone and lonely, working in a loss-prone industry. Additionally, many pastors have a susceptible temperament, with the valuable, but costly, ability to connect emotionally with others and being naturally drawn to help – sometimes addictively. Often and their deep concern to meet the need will not let them rest until their bodies force them to do so through illness or collapse. Even for those who affirm the place of self-care, it too frequently remains an issue of low urgency for most pastors, so that until it gets into their diary, it will rarely be followed through.

This exercise helps student to become aware of the diversity of areas of life that impinge on our ability to function healthily, and to raise the awareness of the need for self-care for sustaining ling-term ministry. It causes them to reflect on their lifestyle, and to design a personalised self-care strategy covering three broad strategies - rest, retreating and supportive relationships. This will be revisited each year in their Personal Formation subjects to allow students to update it along with their changing roles and personal situations, and to establish habits of self-care that will continue in years to come in ministry.

Biblical foundation

From the beginning, God put in place rhythms of work and rest for his creation. He personally demonstrated the principle of resting on the Sabbath (Gen. 2:3), a principle later codified in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:8) and reinforced by Jesus, who reminded us of its nature as essentially beneficial to human life, and not a religious rule (Mk. 2:27). Other principles from the Law such as the Year of Jubilee (Lev, 25:8-55) and the Sabbath Year (Lev. 25:1-7) indicate multi-layer care strategies for both man and planet through rest. With modern life removing most of the "down time," this is a message for our time more than any other.

The Bible also affirms the principle that we minister to others out of the strength and wisdom that God provides, and not our own (1 Pet. 4:11; Phil. 4:13). In fact to do otherwise may be seen as arrogant belief in our own capacity to do God's work. Paul affirms that God is the source of all comfort, and that in order to pass it onto others he needed to continually receive it from God first (2 Cor. 1:3-7). It is only as we as "jars of clay" are filled with God that we are able to minister (2 Cor. 4:7).

Cross discipline information:

Psychological research has highlighted several emotional threats in ministry which require recovery and re-creation. Arch Hart has highlighted the role of loneliness and the loss-prone nature of ministry with fickle people and describes how without proper strategies for rest, support and renewal, creativity is crushed and joy stifled.[1] The Alban institute's research and church consultancy has highlighted the vulnerability of ministers as a professional group and their need for proactive periods of restoration.[2] Psychology in general affirms the life-giving power of both interconnectedness with others and recovery times, noting the dangers to mental and physical health of prolonged periods of stress[3] and has observed a high rate of amongst pastors "anhedonia" (the inability to experience pleasure due to overstimulation of the pleasure center of the brain)[4], not to mention high levels of burnout and depression. The only solution to this is rest and relaxation. Palmer has used retreating for reflection and community extensively with teachers and pastors to help restore the inner person within the role and to deepen the authenticity of that person's presence with others.[5]

Issues to be aware of:

Theologians have had an innate disregard for the theological significance of emotion, except to regard it as a relic of the old self,[6] and there are likely to be members of your group that agree with them because of their theological backgrounds. We need to help them see that the dichotomy between the intellectual and the affective both distorts our picture of God, and causes Christian to repress feelings with dangerous results. Contemporary theologians such as Wolfhart Pannenburg and Abraham Heschel are increasingly speaking of the pathos of God, and warning that we must not relegate the affective life to psychology.

Some students may also deny their human needs and claim that their relationship with God is enough for them. While the sentiment may be admirable, this is not a realistic view of human nature or of God's intention for us as mutually supportive people. It is probably best to affirm the place of God in their self-care strategy and then to ask them what else they will put in place based on the resource.

Possible discussion questions:

- What is the role of self-leadership in being an effective leader of others?
- What percentage of working time is it reasonable to allocate to retreating as part of a self-care strategy?
- Which people in your sphere of influence nourish your inner being? Drain your inner being?
- What makes you stop? What restores you? How will this information affect your self-care strategy?

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[1] See for instance Hart, Archibald D. *Coping with Depression in the Ministry and Other Helping Professions.* Nashville: Nelson/Word, 1984 and *Dark Clouds, Silver Linings* Colorado Springs, Focus on the Family Publishing, 1993.

[2] Lewis, Jacqueline. *Good-Enough Self-Care,* Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute 2007.

[3] See for instance, Hart, Archibald D. *Adrenaline and Stress*, Dallas: Word, 1995.

[4] Hart, Archibald D. Thrilled to Death, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007.

[5] See Palmer, Parker J. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of the Teacher's Life.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

[6] Anderson, Ray S. Self-Care, Wheaton, IL: Bridgepoint, 1995, 54.

Introduction

Attention to the body – both the physical and the emotional - is integral to the spiritual life. The body is a gift and vehicle of God, integral to our being and our ministry, and the full range of human emotions is an essential part of God's image. Tilden Edwards describes us as "inspirited bodies and embodied spirits" and notes that our bodies, including mind emotion and spirit, are "different foci of one linked reality."[7] Yet many Christians have considered the body and the emotions as something outside the orbit of intentional spiritual formation. Yet to ignore physical and emotional needs is to treat God's creation violently and contemptuously. In ministry, we may be tempted to rationalise or spiritualise our lack of self-care as "servant leadership" or "dying to ourselves," but it is more likely to be motivated by trying to meet unmet needs like approval or perfectionism, or to do with disorganisation, lack of planning or inability to prioritise.

Self-care may be a "dirty word" in many evangelical circles, but it is a necessity and not a luxury for healthy leadership, vibrant spirituality and long term ministry. Given the pressure of ministry and the often limitless boundaries of the congregation, establishing a self-care strategy as part of a leader's ministry philosophy is essential for ensuring self-care does not get squeezed out. Life must be lived at the pace for which we were designed and for most of us that requires slowing down and recalibrating, before our bodies or emotions cause us to stop altogether. We need to heed the rhythms of rest and re-creation that God designed us for, both physically and emotionally, as exemplified in the Sabbath. We need to take regular time out for reflection, to hear from God and notice our own symptoms about how we are getting on. We need to protect ourselves with trustworthy people who we have given permission to share and speak into our lives.

This exercise begins with a checklist of some typical self-care attitudes and habits. Use it to take a snapshot of your life over the past 6 months. Note the two areas where you measured yourself toward the low end, and write down some strategies you could use to improve this over the next 6 months. The next page helps you design an ongoing self-care strategy. It shows the strategies needed to make the strategy sound, in the three groups of Rest, Retreats and Relationships. Complete as best you can, noting the gaps. Write down some ideas you could use to improve this. Put your findings together into a one page reflection for the next meeting.

Further Reading

Anderson, Ray S. *Self-Care.* Wheaton, IL: Bridgepoint, 1995
Hart, Archibald D. *Adrenaline and Stress*. Dallas: Word, 1995.
Hart, Archibald D. Thrilled to Death. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007.
Lewis, Jacqueline. *Good-Enough Self-Care.* Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute 2007
Palmer, Parker J. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of the Teacher's Life.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

[7] Tilden Edwards, *Living in the Presence: Disciplines for the Spiritual Heart,* San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1987, 17.

Self-care Checklist in Ministry

Assess the past 6 months of your life in each of these attributes:

	low 1	2	3	4	high 5
Living in the tension – seek balance, not extremes; flexibility, not rigidity.					
The spiritual uplift – practice the spiritual disciplines, keep spirituality fresh.					
Letting-go techniques – understand how stress affects your system; know and use the release valves.					
Time out – opt out regularly, daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually.					
Support-systems that work – establish or join an accountability group.					
Getting the body moving – establish a realistic exercise regimen.					
Monitoring our intake – cut down on sugar, salt, fat and processed food.					
The psychotherapy tune-up – find and use a competent counsellor when necessary.					
Getting control of our time – put into practice all those time saving strategies you already know.					
The value of assertiveness – say what you mean and mean what you say.					
The power of laughter – develop your sense of humor.					
Monitoring our ambitions – balance career choices and career moves with family, health and lifestyle imperatives.					

From Roy Oswald, Clergy Self-Care: Finding a balance for effective ministry, 1991, Alban Institute

key:

1 = not thought about it
2 = thought about it, but done nothing yet
3 = started, but not satisfied
4 = functioning adequately
5 = in place

Building a Self-Care Strategy

Assess the past 6 months of your life in each of these attributes:

Rest	**For:** • Renewal • Recreation • Marriage building • Personal functioning	**Circle if done in last 12 months** ○ Sabbath – (1day off per week) ○ min 3 nights at home per week ○ holidays ○ honeymoons (long weekend off with your spouse but without kids) **Circle if done in last 10 years** ○ long service leave ○ study leave ○ sabbatical
Retreats	**For:** • Extended time alone with God • Journaling • Objectivity and perspective • Vision and Mission • Life evaluation	**Circle if done in past 12 months** ○ ½ day retreat ○ Overnight retreat ○ Week retreat ○ Silent retreat
Relationships	**For:** • Support • Accountability • Objectivity • Empowerment • Confidentiality	**add names of your relationships network**

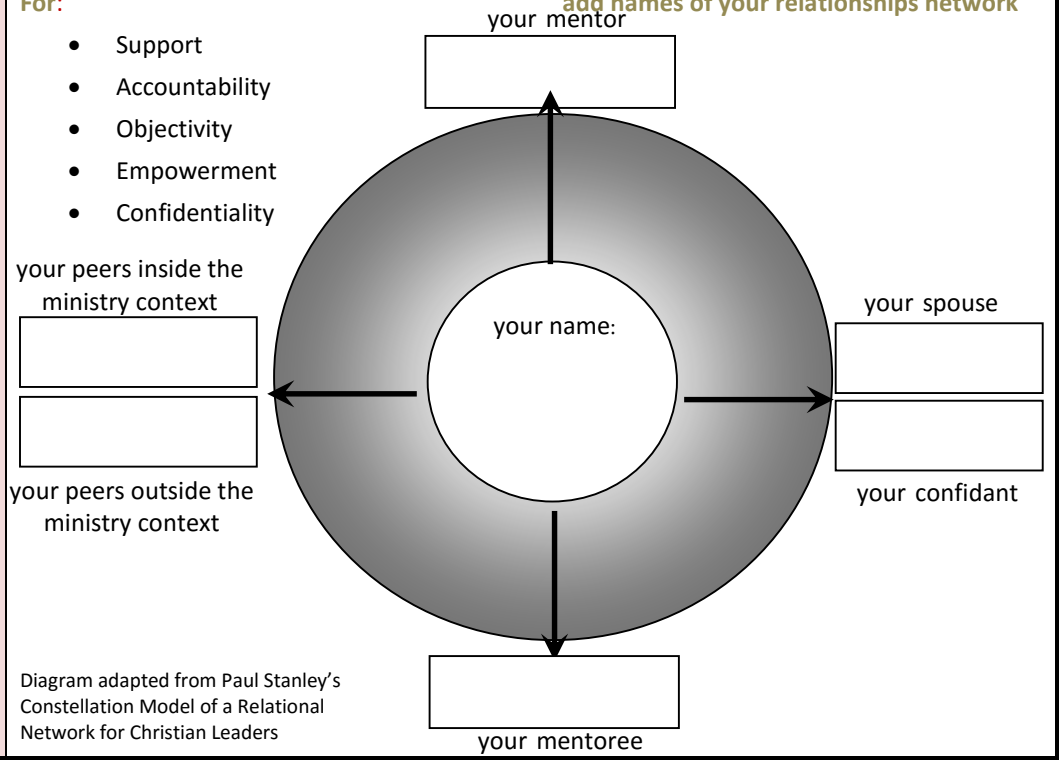

Diagram adapted from Paul Stanley's Constellation Model of a Relational Network for Christian Leaders

APPENDIX F

WORKSHOPPING

Workshopping

Workshopping is a general term describing any process to help a student reflect, identify, clarify, process or develop a strategy for a difficulty in their life or ministry. The possibilities for workshops are endless, and work differently for different people, depending on things like temperament and preferred learning style, but generally focus on self-discovery self-awareness, and gentle care-fronting, while avoiding advice-giving, group therapy or complaint sessions. The facilitator needs to ensure the trainee feels safe and can opt out at any time. As a reminder of training sessions, some types of workshopping exercises are as follows, grouped under various learning styles:

Visual/Spatial (creating and making sense of visual-spatial representations of the world)

- Various mapping exercises – linear or spatial - your choice of criteria
- organizing group members or objects to represent a scenario/problem/relationship
- scattered paper squares
- changing viewing angles
- diagramizing
- murals, models, paintings
- mind-mapping
- dreaming

Kinesthetic (using the body to solve problems, to create products, and to convey ideas and emotions)

- standing circle
- continuum - clarifying different functions, key relationships, roles etc
- acting/ role play
- doing, making, gestures, body language

Interpersonal (working effectively with other people)

- Sharing and relating
- networking/introducing
- working together
- Interviewing

Intrapersonal (exploring and understanding one's own emotions, goals and intentions)

- journaling
- retreating
- immediacy and other group skills
- dislocation – experience a new place / situation

Logical (exploring and experimenting with patterns, categories and relationships by manipulating objects or symbols)

- List, categorize and/or classify key issues
- timelining and patterning

Linguistic (use language to excite, please, convince, stimulate or convey information)

- write a poem / word picture / analogy to describe convey a situation
- Sharing
- Recommend resources to read

Musical (the ability to enjoy, perform or compose a musical piece)

- Compose a song to convey/capture the situation,
- Listen to/create music or worship songs, then share/journal what happened to you
- Use sounds to convey/describe

Classification from Gardner, Howard. Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences. NY: Basic Books, 1993 (10th ed.)

APPENDIX G

FORMATION GROUP CLOSURE

Closure	
Step	**My Strategies**
1. Preparation • Start the group with the end in mind – list end date on group covenant • Give several reminders through the year that closure will come in November • In the 3rd and 2nd last meetings, emphasize how many more meetings to go	
2. Tangible/Memorable Event • Do something unusual for the Closure meeting to mark the occasion • Appeal to the senses to make it memorable – the smell of coffee, view of the sea etc	
Change of Relationship • Explain clearly that the relationships in the group will change after closure. You will relate in different ways. Articulate clearly what that relationship will be - eg "the next time we meet, I will no longer be your Formation Director" • Explain clearly what availability you will have to group members after closure, and what boundaries will exist	
4. Feedback • As we all need to grow, ask for feedback from the group using an evaluation form. This will ask about their group, their coach and mentor, and the subject as a whole.	
5. Grief / Celebration • Be prepared for strong feelings of grief, possibly catching some people by surprise • Celebrate what you have achieved and enjoyed as a group, and the growth of individuals	

APPENDIX H

FORMATION DIRECTOR ORIENTATION SCHEDULE

10am	**Coffee and Connecting** • Previous directors: share with something you learned or implemented from last year or plan to do differently this year • All: one question you have about being a FD	Storytelling resource
10.30am	**Key Processes** • Story-telling – what is important to do? • Balancing the 3 'Formations' (SF, CF, MF) • Grading - what exactly?, Grading Guide, Communicating suitability for ministry	
11:30am	**Orientation to Documentation** • Student forms • Director forms	Sample Formation File. Formation handbook.
12am	**Coach and Mentor Supervision:** • purpose • process and orientation meeting • resources	coach and mentor orientation resources
1pm	**LUNCH**	
2pm	**Workshopping** • Designing creative learning environments • Impact of learning styles • Skills - eg 'call to account' • demonstrate workshopping/exercises • provide new resources	Workshopping resource Resources File Paper/pens for workshopping
3pm	**Groups for this year** • group lists • process for trainee changes • go through process for 15 minute group meeting at Suppertime at retreat to meet and explain stories	Group lists (from Regional Director)
3.30pm	**Close coffee**	

APPENDIX J

TELLING LIFE STORIES

The process of telling life stories is the most efficient way to create a safe place and an environment of trust, which is a necessary precursor to students relating authentically and being willing to self-disclose. However, storytelling leaves a person feeling vulnerable, and so should be handled carefully by the Director. The following guidelines may help:

- No-one should be forced to share beyond their comfort level. Students should be given free rein to tell as much or as little as they want to.
- There is no time limit for storytelling. Students should take as long as it takes.
- If a story goes excessively long, or becomes trivial, and the group is showing signs of discomfort, the Director may interrupt the story to check on progress, and to make the speaker aware of the time elapsed. The Director may recommend a break if the group needs it, and may speak to the storyteller in the break about projections for the length of the story from here. Unnecessary detail should also be blocked by the Director
- Don't interrupt, and block group members who try to problem-solve or give advice. The group should listen without responses which infer or convey any judgement or assessment.
- don't rush in – make sure the person has finished telling their full story
- thank the person
- Choose a relational skill for the group to use in response. As well as a tool to manage responses to the storyteller, these are great skills to develop relational capacity and listening skills. In practice, these skills are used by all of us to a lesser or greater degree mixed together. However, to practice them in such a deliberate way makes us more aware of each skill and its impact, and more aware of how we relate in general.
- Relational Skills may be chosen as appropriate to the story and the storyteller. Getting to know the skills is important for choosing appropriately to build greater self-awareness in the speaker.
- Process of responding to stories. It is important that each group member respond. Failing to do so leaves significant doubt in the mind of the storyteller about how s/he has been received. Therefore, this process needs to be carefully managed, ensuring each group member responds in a positive affirming fashion. See Richard peace's *Spiritual Autobiography* for ideas[1]
- Before anyone from the group speaks again, ask the storyteller how s/he feels. This often precipitates more sharing, often at a deeper level.
- After that, question may be asked by either the speaker or group. Block any attempts at advice-giving or problem solving
- Pray for the speaker. Gather around them, perhaps lay hands on them, and ask a number of people to pray in response to the work God is doing in their life as evident from the story.

[1] Richard peace, *Spiritual Autobiography,* Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1998.

APPENDIX K

FORMATION DIRECTOR SUPERVISION SCHEDULE

10	**Coffee and Connecting** • Stories from groups – eg one inspiration / stress	
11	**FD Supervision** • facilitation • personhood • qualities and skills • resources	supervision resources new resources
12	**Coach and Mentor Supervision** • Meetings • Objectives	Supervision resources
1pm	**LUNCH**	
1.45	**Issues arising through the year** • sharing experiences and learning	
2.30	**End of year** • closure • reports • evaluations	
2.45	**Plans for next year**	
3pm	**Close**	

APPENDIX K

FORMATION DIRECTOR SUPERVISION

Sessions with My Group
Preparation:
Process:
Content: who drives this?
Evaluation/Reflection:

APPENDIX K

FORMATION DIRECTOR SUPERVISION (continued)

Formation Directing in General
3 formations – character, spiritual, ministry
Confidentiality, Authenticity, openness, safety
Key issues addressed / referred

Mentor/Coach Supervision
Meetings with coaches/mentors
Objectives checked/aligned

APPENDIX K

FORMATION DIRECTOR SUPERVISION (continued)

Personhood
Growth: Reflect on changes in your personhood over past year
Validation: Accountability – who are you accountable to? Quality of Key Relationships? Resources/processes?
Conviction: 1. I am a formation director 2. I am becoming a formation director 3. I am unsettled about being a formation director 4. I am not a formation director
Priority: Formation Direction as a priority in my overall Ministry
Sphere of influence: Is facilitating a Formation Group of emerging Christian leaders appropriate for me at this stage in my life and ministry?

APPENDIX L

GRADING GUIDE

Grading Guide	
This grading system assists with moderating grading levels across the various Directors. It gives indicators of what to look for within various grade ranges out of 10	
1-4	May express feelings, but has little self-awareness at a feeling level. Uses defense mechanisms and keeps others at a distance. Little awareness of dissonance or unsettledness in their lives that is evident to others.
5-6	The student can identify and write about events that have impacted them, both in the group and in their current life situation, and can articulate their feelings about those events. They communicate a sense of personal relationship with God.
7-8	The student can write about their feelings raised by events and the impact of those. They can articulate insights gained about their personhood. The student demonstrates some self-awareness about the meaning of their responses and some possible causes for this
9	The student can synergize their feelings, impacts and thoughts raised by events into a coherent story of their personal formation journey, its causes and needs, and with a sense of God's partnership. The student can articulate their relational dynamic accurately
10	The student can demonstrate awareness of the change occurring in their personhood and of God's work in their discipleship. The student takes personal responsibility for their formation, and commits to growth strategies and support mechanisms, rather than reactively blaming others, justifying or denying etc.

APPENDIX L

GRADING GUIDE

Individual Grading Guide **page 1**

Trainee: _____ Formation Director _____

Grade each item out of 10 based on the grading system provided.	
1. Self-awareness: The student is generally aware of who they are, how they function and how they impact others. The student can reflect with both some objectivity and insight.	
2. Spiritual Awareness: The student demonstrates a deep awareness of, familiarity with and ability to be present with God, and a desire to grow more in Christ-likeness as outlined in Scripture. The student demonstrates familiarity with meditation and spiritual discipline.	
3. Teachability: The student is keen to grow and regards him/herself as a 'lifetime learner'. The student handles criticism as well as can be expected, and responds well to constructive suggestions. The student responds well to authority	
4. Transparency: The student is able to share needs, weaknesses and feelings appropriately, and is open about their life and motives with their trust community. The student can relate genuinely, authentically and with love as the person s/he is	
5. Call: The student has a nuanced and accurate sense of who God has made them to be in ministry based on their gifts, passion and personality. They are relatively free from the driven need to please or perform.	

(Grading Guide continues over page)

APPENDIX L

GRADING GUIDE

Individual Grading Guide **page 2**

6. Reflective Ability: The student can readily identify and express their feelings, showing awareness of what is going on for them at a feeling level and at a spiritual level. The student takes ownership of his/her feelings.	
7. Integrity: The student's outer and inner lives match – they are in essence what they appear in the presence of others. There is a good head-heart connection.	
8. Relational Skills: The student generally relates well to others, is a good listener and uses various relational skills easily. The student has the ability to connect and show concern, with the ability to be assertive or exhort others as required.	
9. Balance: The student demonstrates healthy priorities and a good balance between work/recreation/family demands. The student has a developed self-care strategy and a healthy outlook overall.	
10. Healthy Relationships: The student has healthy key relationships, and is well connected in other meaningful supportive relationships. The student has good boundaries, and can identify and is free from inappropriate relationships.	
TOTAL (100%)	**%**

APPENDIX M

ASSESSMENT TASKS

Retreat Reflective Paper Write a personal response to the Formation retreat, reflecting on its impact on you, and how you functioned in your Formation Group. Assessment by the Formation Director will include an evaluation of your engagement with the residential process, and with others in your group. This is due at the first Formation Group Workshop after the residential	1-2 pages 10%
Leading Bible Insight Each student will lead the group in a Bible insight. This is a Bible reflection using a passage of your choice. This is not a Bible study, but a chance for you to discuss how this passage impacted on you at a deep personal level. However, you will need to understand the passage first to ensure you are listening to it wisely. Use the resource provided to understand how the Bible Insight works.	Process and insights assessed - no written submission 10%
Resource Reflective Papers Your formation Director will introduce the next resource before the end of the meeting. Between the meetings, set aside a minimum of 1 hour in a quiet place to complete the resource, reading the accompanying notes beforehand. Write a one page reflection on the impact of this resource on you. This reflection is confidential but will be submitted to your Formation Director only. Choose part of this impact to share with the group at the next meeting.	1 page each meeting 10% each meeting = 70%
Participation in the group (based on grading guide) Your Formation Group is a rare and precious opportunity to share journeys with fellow travelers training for ministry. As trust is built in the group, it will become a place of acceptance and support as you explore God's growing plans for you as He equips you for ministry in deep and personal ways. Your engagement with the group process and group members will be critical for making the most of this opportunity	10%

APPENDIX N

DEMAND HOURS ALLOCATION

timing	**component**	**(hours)**
March	**FORMING**: Opening group retreat of 2 nights (see schedule below)	28 hrs
March - April	Written Assessment: Regional Retreat Reflection Paper	3 hrs (1000 words)
April – October	**FORMATION:** • 7 group meetings of ½ day (4 hours) each • 7 reflective exercises: - one to be completed (1 hour each) before each meeting - write up with a 1-page reflection brought to meeting • Themes as follows, student may choose from several resources for each theme. Others may be done as optional extension exercises: o April (SF) – counter-culture o May (CF) – key relationships o June (MF) – self-care o July (SF) – contemplative prayer o Aug (CF) – holistic spirituality o Sep (MF) – calling o Oct (SF) – meditative Bible reading • 8 mentoring meetings of 2 hours each	28 hrs 7hrs 6hrs (2000 words in total) 16 hrs
Individual Retreats	Individual retreats will be designed into PF2 (½ day (4 hours) silent retreat) and PF3 (24 hour overnight silent retreat)	
November	**CLOSURE**: Group closure meeting	4 hrs
Required Reading	from Booklist	70 hrs (875 pages)
	TOTAL	162 hrs

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